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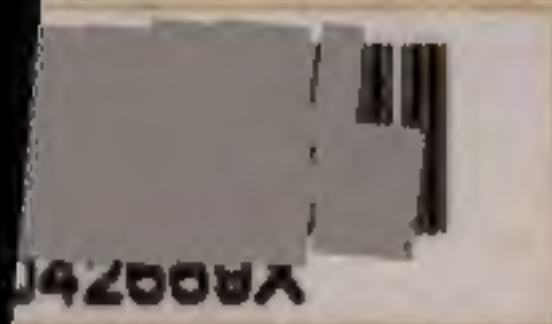
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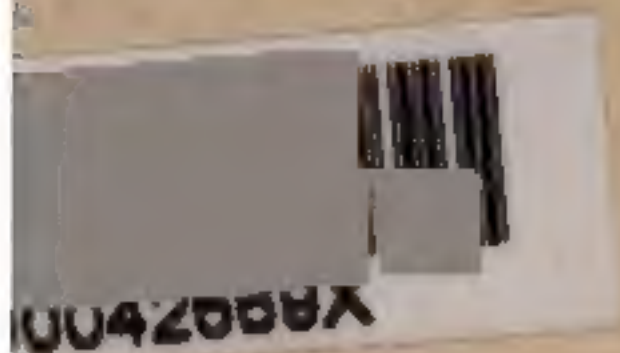
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THE HISTORY
OF
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

ABRIDGED FROM THE WORK OF
THE REV. JOSEPH MILNER, M. A.

PRINTED BY L. N. BEELEY AND SONS, WESTON-UNDER-WOOD,
THAMES LITTON, ENGLAND.

THE HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST;

**FROM THE TIMES OF THE APOSTLES TO THE
RISE OF THE PAPAL APOSTACY.**

**ABRIDGED FROM THE WORK
OF THE REV. JOSEPH MILNER, M. A.**



**PUBLISHED BY R. B. SEELEY AND W. BURNSIDE;
AND SOLD BY L. B. SEELEY AND SONS,
FLEET STREET, LONDON.
MDCCCXXXIV.**

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present volume furnishes, chiefly in the language of Milner, a view of the History of the Church of Christ, from the apostolic times to the period when the rise of the Papal power wrought an entire change in the state and prospects of Christianity, and quickly drove the faithful servants of Christ “into the wilderness.” This change, indeed, was so great and so total, that it seems most fitting entirely to change the form of the history, and, instead of following, with the Author in whose steps we have heretofore trodden, the few remaining disciples of Christ into their exile and obscurity, to commence anew the narrative, under the more comprehensive title of “a HISTORY OF THE PAPACY; and of the sufferings of the Church of Christ under its dominion.” This will be attempted at as early a

period as possible. The volume thus projected will complete the narrative, down to the times of the Reformation, a considerable portion of the history of which has already been given in "THE CHRISTIAN'S FAMILY LIBRARY."

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HISTORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST.

CENTURY I.

I.—JERUSALEM.

THAT “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Jesus Christ, beginning at Jerusalem,” (Luke xxiv. 47,) is a passage of scripture, which at once points out what the Christian religion is, and where we may look for its beginning and for its character. We are to describe the rise of a dispensation the most glorious to God, and the most beneficent to man. Christianity found mankind in an universal state of sin and misery. In Judea alone something of the worship of the true God existed. The forms of the Mosaic economy subsisted, but were greatly obscured and corrupted with Pharisaic traditions and Sadducean profaneness. The ancient people of God had defiled themselves with heathen profligacy; and, though there wanted not a multitude of teachers among them, yet, when He, who knew what was in man, saw the spiritual condition of this people, “he was moved with compassion toward them, because they fainted, and were as sheep without a shepherd.” Certainly they were in possession of a degree at least of moral informa-

tion, though it was extremely defective, and, in many points of view, fundamentally erroneous. But, of that knowledge which relates to repentance and remission of sins, they were totally destitute. Notwithstanding the light of the Old Testament, the provision of sacrifices, the declaration of so many prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the examples of so many holy men, who, in that dark and preparatory dispensation, had learned to fear God, and to believe in his promises of grace, it does not appear that the body of the Jewish nation were, in their religious state, materially better than the rest of the world. That men needed such a change of disposition as in scripture is expressed by the term *μετανοια*, that they must become new creatures, and receive the forgiveness of sins by faith in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, were ideas unknown in Judea:—if indeed we except the dim light which visited the souls of Zacharias, of Simeon, of Anna, and of a few other devout persons, who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Such was the dismal night, in which the Sun of Righteousness made his appearance in the world. Scarcely in any age had ignorance and wickedness a more general prevalence. The history of Josephus evinces this. This author dwells chiefly, indeed, on public and political affairs; yet he throws a sufficient light on the manners of the times, and shows, that the extreme impiety and profligacy of the Herodian princes, were but too faithfully transcribed into the lives of their subjects. There had been periods of Jewish story more favourable to godliness: for instance, the age of Joshua, of David, of Ezra, and of Nehemiah. For some persons there ever were who, at least, implicitly rested on the God of Israel, and trusted in the Redeemer that was to come. But the darkest season was chosen for the exhibition of the light of life by him, “who hath put the time and seasons in his own power.”

To know our own depravity and helplessness, and, by faith in Christ, to know by our own experience the suitable and the efficacious cure, is doubtless the genuine secret of true piety. But wherever wickedness and profaneness have spread very generally, the knowledge of these doctrines is usually lost. Amidst a thousand disputes, even on religious subjects, these are erased out of men's creeds,—the very doctrines—which alone can be the means of freeing them from vice and folly. It was their ignorance of these things, which moved the Son of God to lament the uninformed condition of the Jews at that time. To dwell on the history of Christ himself is foreign to my design. A few souls were converted during His abode on earth: but the five hundred brethren, who saw him all at one time after his resurrection, seem to have made the sum total of his disciples. And it may further be observed, that all these, as well as the eleven apostles themselves, were possessed with notions of a temporal kingdom, the rock on which their countrymen fatally split in their expositions of the scriptures relating to the expected Messiah; and that they had not yet learned, with any clearness or steadiness of apprehension, to set their affections on things above.

And now was the critical moment, when it pleased God to erect the first Christian church at Jerusalem. This was the first of those EFFUSIONS of the Spirit of God, which, from age to age, have visited the earth, since the coming of Christ, and prevented it from being quite overrun with ignorance and sin. It is an unspeakable advantage, that we have the sacred narrative to unfold this to our understandings. The want of such an advantage will appear too fully in the history of the succeeding EFFUSIONS of the Divine Spirit. Our duty, however, is not to complain, but to be thankful. If we carefully attend to this first instance, it will serve as a specimen, by which to try other religious

phenomena: and whether they lead to genuine piety or not, may generally be judged from their agreement or disagreement with this.

Let us then observe the circumstances in which this effusion of the Holy Spirit was vouchsafed. As repentance and remission of sins were leading doctrines of Christ's religion, the most ample room had been made for them by the completion of his redemption. He had offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, "was risen" from the dead "for our justification," and in the sight of his disciples was just ascended up to heaven. That the gospel, the good news for penitent sinners, the good news of reconciliation with God, should begin at Jerusalem, the scene of so much wickedness perpetrated, and of so much grace abused, was itself no mean argument of the riches of divine goodness, and was an illustrious exemplification of the grand purpose of the gospel,—to justify the ungodly, and to quicken the dead. By the order of their Divine Master, the apostles remained at Jerusalem, waiting for the promised Holy Spirit "which they had heard of him," (Acts i. 4,) and abode in mutual charity, and in the fervent exercise of prayer and supplication. What the Holy Spirit was to do for them, they seemed little to understand, if one may conjecture from their last question to their Master, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It is natural to apprehend, that they were feasting their imaginations with the delightful prospect of a splendid kingdom, attended with all the circumstances of external pomp and grandeur. Principalities and lordships were, in their fancy, soon to be assumed in the room of fishermen's nets and boats, and they pleased themselves with the notion of their Master's external dominion in the world. Not that they were without a genuine taste for something infinitely better. At any rate, they afford us one useful lesson:—"they continued in prayer and supplication." In every

age, they who do so, shall doubtless understand, in God's due time, what the kingdom of heaven means ; and find by happy experience that kingdom established in their own souls, even " righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

During this interesting crisis, we do not find them employed in any other business than this of prayer, except in filling up the apostolical college of twelve, by the substitution of Matthias in the room of the unhappy Judas, who, for the love of a little gain of this world, had unfitted himself for the riches of the next, and rendered himself unworthy to partake of the marvellous scene now about to be exhibited. Behold then the twelve apostles, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, Simon Zelotes, Judas the brother of James, and Matthias, expecting and longing for the unspeakable blessings of true Christianity!

The pentecost, one of the Jewish festivals, was the era of the divine visitation. The apostles were all in harmony assembled together ; when lo ! suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Their Master, in his conference with Nicodemus, had compared the operations of the Holy Spirit to the wind, and the sound from heaven on this occasion was a just emblem of the power of the divine influence now commencing. And " there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." Another emblem no less just, which the church of England uses in her hymn to the Holy Ghost in the ordination office,

‘ Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.’

In truth they now found that they were " baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire." And the effects in purifying their hearts, in enlightening their under-

standings, and in furnishing them with gifts, and zeal, and boldness, hitherto unknown, were very soon exhibited. They were all filled with the "Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Of the many miraculous gifts now imparted, this of tongues, at once so useful for the propagation of the gospel, and so striking an attestation of its truth, first displayed itself to the amazement of a number of Jews, out of every nation under heaven, who heard these Galileans speak each in his own language. There is reason to believe, that, as many of them were devout men, they had been prepared by divine grace for the effectual reception of the gospel, and that a considerable part of the first converts were of their body.

While many were expressing their admiration at this strange event, others, whom we may suppose to have been chiefly the native Jews, who understood not these several languages, derided the apostles as intoxicated with wine: and now the zeal of Peter was stirred up to preach both to those who admired, and to those who scorned. He begged them to have so much candour, as not rashly to suppose them to be men overcome with liquor, which the very time of the day rendered improbable, the third hour of the day, answering to our nine in the morning, when it should seem the Jews were rarely known to be in that situation. And as his audience professed a regard for the sacred oracles, he pointed out to them a remarkable prophecy, in the second chapter of Joel, then fulfilling, namely, the promise of an effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh, attended with dreadful punishments on those who should despise it: yet that whoever, in the deep sense of his sinfulness and misery, should call on the name of the Lord, should be saved. He then shows them how God had fulfilled his own purposes in the death of Jesus, at the very time when they had been executing the dictates of their own malice.

He proceeds to testify also of his resurrection, according to the testimony of David, in Psalm xvi. and cx. in both which Psalms it was evident, that, not David himself, but Christ, was the subject of the prophecy. He openly declares that he himself and his brethren were witnesses of the resurrection of their Master, that he was exalted to heaven, and had received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he had now shed forth on the apostles, and concerning which they now had the plain demonstration of their senses. The conclusion which he draws from this chain of argument, supported by the mutual state of facts and prophecies, was this,—that that despised person, whom they had thought unworthy to live, and had exposed to the most painful and ignominious death, was owned by the God of their fathers to be the Lord and Messiah, who was the expectation of the Jews, and through whom alone salvation was offered to sinful men.

The design of the whole sermon was evidently to produce conviction of sin in the hearers; and it pleased God to crown it with success. Multitudes were pricked in their hearts; they found themselves guilty of murdering the Christ of God: and so powerfully were they struck with a sense of their extreme unworthiness, that they found themselves also destitute of all resources in themselves. They cry to Peter and to the rest, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Similar indeed is the beginning of all true repentance, when men find themselves really lost, helpless, and willing to be led in any way which God shall please, because they have no ability in themselves, and “there is no health in them.” Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Thus the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, in the name of Jesus, began at Jerusalem. The people were called upon to "loath themselves for their past iniquities," and to give themselves up to God for an entire renovation of soul; and the grace of God in Christ was offered to every one of them. The apostle exhorted them all to receive this grace, by believing on Jesus for the remission of sins, with a submission to his ordinance of baptism as an emblem of washing away their sins; and he assured them, that God would receive them into his favour in this way: that however guilty they were, all their sins should be pardoned, as if they had never been committed: and the Holy Ghost should be poured on them also: for the promise of it was very general; to them, to their children, to the most distant lands, wherever God should call men to reconciliation by Jesus Christ. Thus did St. Peter convince his hearers of sin, and instruct them in the way of salvation.

They, whose hearts God had smitten with a sense of guilt, were consoled by the grace of forgiveness; and "with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls."

In this manner did the convictions and consolations of the Holy Ghost attend the first preaching of St. Peter. And this great multitude appears to have been fully converted to Christianity: for they continued "stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Here we see the regular appearance of the first Christian church. These men were not Christians in name only; they understood and believed the apostolical doctrine concerning repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ: they continued united to the pastors whom God had made instru-

ments to their conversion: they received constantly the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which they enjoyed real communion with their Saviour; and prayer was their daily employment and delight. Their holy boldness towards God, and their joyful sensation of forgiveness, were tempered with a godly fear. Every soul was possessed with this consistent mixture of holy joy and fear. They had felt the pangs of guilt: they had seen what a price was paid for their redemption: they "rejoiced with trembling," as men just escaped from the pit of destruction; and the same spirit which cried, Abba, Father, in their hearts, taught them to reverence his justice and his holiness, to fear him, and to dread sin above all other evils. And though it does not appear to have been any injunction of the apostles, that they should live together in a community of goods, and though experience soon taught the first Christians, that the GENERAL establishment and continuance of such a usage was impracticable, yet, doubtless, this practice for the present was a rare and convincing instance of mutual charity, and proved how soon the operations of divine grace had loosened their minds from the love of this world. They "sold their goods and possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." In this happy frame of mind they spent much of their time in the temple, and in discharging the mutual offices of social kindness: even their bodily food was received with a gladness before unknown. The grace of God gave a pleasant tincture to every object with which they conversed; and while they extolled it with their hearts and lips, they, as yet, found favour with all the people. The natural enmity of the heart against the gospel of Christ did not at first show itself, and the purity of their lives could not but recommend them to the esteem of others. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Thus plainly St. Luke intimates whose grace it was that effected all

this, and that his hand, in the divine effusion here described, ought ever to be acknowledged.

A miracle wrought soon after by Peter and John, on a lame man, a well-known beggar above forty years old, gave a farther attestation to their divine authority. Peter was hence led to preach to the admiring multitude, the same doctrine of repentance and remission, and thus he exalted the Lord Jesus as the Holy One, and the Just, and the Prince of Life, to whom they had wickedly preferred even a murderer, Barabbas. He disclaims all merit in himself or in his colleagues in the miracle: he shows that God had glorified his Son Jesus: and that it was through faith in his name, that the act had been performed. He charitably alleges their ignorance, as the only possible alleviation of their guilt; and which indeed alone prevented it from being unpardonable. He exhorts them to repentance and conversion, and lays open to their view the prospect, not of a temporal, but of a spiritual kingdom; in the hope of which they were to rejoice, and patiently bear the afflictions of this present life: he warns them at the same time of the threats denounced by Moses against the despisers of the Messiah, through whom alone salvation was offered to all nations, though the first invitation was addressed to the Jews.

The church was now increased to five thousand; and the signal for persecution was raised by the magistrates of Jerusalem; many of whom were Sadducees, enemies to the doctrine of a resurrection, and in truth to every thing that had any tendency to raise men's minds above the world. The two apostles were imprisoned that evening, but their examination was deferred till the next day. The high priest, and the persons of greatest authority, looked on this matter as an occasion of sufficient consequence to require the calling of a solemn court. Peter to their interrogatories frankly answers, that the miracle had been wrought in the "name of Jesus, whom ye crucified,

—whom God raised from the dead.” He boldly rebukes them for their contempt of him, who is the only Saviour: for “there is none other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.”

The wisdom and boldness of two unlettered fishermen, who had been companions of Jesus, struck the court with astonishment. But finding no present opportunity of gratifying their malice, on account of the splendour of the miracle, they dismissed them with a strict charge to be silent in future concerning the name of Jesus, though the apostles ingenuously confessed their inability to comply with such an order, because, “they must obey God rather than men.”

The apostles returned to their company, and reporting the threats of the magistrates, they all, with united supplication, intreated the Lord to grant them boldness to persevere, notwithstanding the menaces of his and their enemies. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and enabled to proceed with calm intrepidity.

The most perfect unanimity as yet prevailed among the Christians; and they not only professed to have all things common, but also practised the rule accordingly with the greatest cheerfulness. Divine grace was largely diffused among them. The poor lacked nothing: the richer brethren converted their possessions into money, and left the distribution of the whole to the discretion of the apostles. And, in this liberality, Barnabas of Cyprus, a Levite, who had lands of his own, most probably, in his native country, was eminently distinguished.

It appeared very manifest, that the apostles enjoyed much more of the power of Christ’s religion than they had ever done while their Master was with them on earth. Such was the effect of the EFFUSION of the Spirit. We hear no more of their dreams concerning a temporal kingdom. The courage of Peter in confronting the magistrates, forms a per-

fect contrast to his timidity in denying his Master. Wherever the same repentance, faith, hope, charity, and heavenly-mindedness appear, THERE is true Christianity; and there also the enmity of the world will be excited. Of this, something has already discovered itself, and more is now calling for our attention, as well as something much more grievous,—the detection of hypocrisy in certain professors of Christianity.

The case of Judas had already prepared the church to expect the appearance of tares among the wheat; and our Lord's parable alluded to, had assured them of it. Yet when such things occur, good men are often too much surprised, and the wicked unreasonably triumph. There was one Ananias among the disciples, whose conscience had so far been impressed, as to respect that doctrine and fellowship to which he had joined himself, but whose heart was never divorced from the love of the world. A regard for his reputation induced him to sell his possessions with the rest: but the fear of poverty, and the want of faith in God, disposed him to reserve part of the price, while he brought the other to the apostles. Peter upbraided him with his being under the influence of Satan, "in lying to the Holy Ghost:" showed him that the guilt of his hypocrisy was aggravated by this consideration, that the action was committed not against man, but against God; and that nothing could be said to extenuate his baseness, because he was under no necessity of selling his property at all, or of laying it at the apostles' feet, after he had sold it. Immediately the unhappy man fell down dead: and, about three hours after, his wife Sapphira was made a similar monument of divine justice and provocation, as she had been partaker of her husband's guilt.

Such a proof of the discernment of spirits, and of the power of punishing hypocrisy, resting in the governors of the church, filled all, who heard these

things, with awe. The Lord had now shown his holiness, as well as his grace; and the love of the world, the standing heresy, which infects his church in all ages, was a second time punished by a signal interposition of heaven. Multitudes of both sexes were added to the church, chiefly of the common people. Of the rest, indeed, though some could not but entertain favourable sentiments of Christianity, yet among the rich and great, none durst hazard his character so far as to espouse it.

The Sadducees appear at this time to have had the chief sway in the Jewish state. These formed a licentious, worldly-minded sect; and in their opinions they were the most corrupt of all those which at that time were maintained in Judea. The high priest and his party were of this sect, and were filled with indignation, to see the progress of the gospel. Their first step was to imprison the apostles, who, by night, through the ministry of an angel, were set free, and ordered to preach in the temple. The next morning a full sanhedrim was convened, and the apostles were ordered to be brought into court. An angel had opened the prison doors; and the court was astonished to find that the prisoners had escaped out of prison: they were, however, informed, that they were preaching in the temple. The favourable regard of the common people obliged the sanhedrim to use some address in conducting their prisoners in a gentle manner before the court. The high priest upbraids them with their disobedience to the former injunction of silence, to whom they returned their former answer, that "they ought to obey God rather than men." They bore witness to the resurrection of Christ, and declared, that "God had exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," and that the "Holy Ghost, whom God bestows on those who obey him, witnessed" the same thing. With such plainness did these first Christians lay

open the real nature of the gospel, and exhibit it as something extremely different from a mere system of morals, though it included all good morality in its nature. The testimony of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins through his blood, and the operations of the Holy Ghost, as they were doubtless the peculiar characteristics of Christianity, so they were those things which most offended the Jewish rulers, and have been indeed the chief object of the enmity of unconverted men in all ages.

The spirit of persecution was proceeding to exercise itself in violent counsels. There was, however, one Gamaliel among them, a Pharisee, of a sect not inimical to the doctrine of a resurrection, and by no means so heterodox in general as the Sadducees, though on the whole agreeing with them in the hatred of Christianity. This man was judicious, learned, and respectable, and possessed much worldly prudence. Beyond this no evidence appears. Providence made an important use of him, at this time, to prolong twelve most valuable lives, who were designed to spread the gospel through the world; and by their inspired writings (not one of which was yet published) to speak to us at this day. Gamaliel by some authentic historical precedents, instructed the members of the court, that persons who rose up to propagate new sects, if not sent of God, were soon annihilated. He wished them to exercise forbearance and moderation toward the apostles, whose influence would soon come to nothing, if it were merely human; while, if divine, to attempt its destruction would be equally foolish and impious. This sage advice was followed, and the apostles were dismissed: but not without stripes, and a severe charge given them, no more to preach in the name of Jesus. They ceased not, however, to "teach and preach Jesus Christ, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

The church was now much enlarged, consisting

partly of native, partly of foreign Jews who used the Greek language, called on that account Hellenists or Grecians. These supposed, that in the daily supply of the poor, the apostles had not ministered equal relief to their widows, as to those of the Hebrews. Men who know any thing of the work of God, in the visitation of his Holy Spirit, and have any acquaintance with the fulness of employ, which Christian ministers have in great and populous cities, in instructing, warning, consoling, and directing awakened and serious minds, will not wonder if, through inadvertence, some temporary neglects might have taken place. The apostles, however, with great mildness and wisdom, soon regulated this affair. They informed the disciples, that the ministry of the word of God must be attended to in the first place, and must not be neglected for the sake of providing for the poor. They therefore advised the disciples to look out for seven holy and wise men, to whom this business should be committed. "But we," say they, "will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." O that those who call themselves their successors, were always disposed in like manner! The whole multitude consented with pleasure. Seven deacons were amicably elected, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, every one of whom has a Grecian name, and therefore may have been an hellenist; and in this easy way the first appearances of contention were blasted in the church, and seven coadjutors were appointed to the apostles, some of whom, at least, were of signal service, not only in temporal, but also in spiritual things. So happy is it to be under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, and so amiably did the love of Christ then rule in the hearts of his people. Even many of the priests now obeyed the gospel, and Jerusalem saw continually large accessions made to the church.

Of these deacons, Stephen was at first the most

distinguished. A synagogue of hellenist Jews held a contest with him, the result of which filled them with such vexation, that they suborned men to accuse him of blasphemy against Moses and against God. By this artifice, Stephen was brought before the sanhedrim, where God threw a lustre over his countenance which even his enemies could not but observe. In his defence he boldly rebuked the Jews, and showed that their conduct was but too faithful a copy of that of their fathers, who had treated Moses and the prophets with contempt, and had murdered a number of those who had prophesied of the coming of the Just One; of whom they had now been the betrayers and murderers, while they vainly gloried in the magnificence of their temple, and put external services in the room of genuine piety.

Thus did Stephen aim at the same point with Peter, to convince his audience of sin in the first place, and to leave them no hope in their own righteousness. Seldom has the contrast between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God appeared more striking. "They were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth." But he, "full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God," and what he saw he openly confessed. Their patience was exhausted, and they stoned him to death, while he was calling upon his Divine Master, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Thus firm and constant was his faith; and his charity was no less conspicuous: for he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" Thus showing how entirely void of malice were those very vehement rebukes, which he had uttered against their wickedness, and which men of pusillanimous prudence in all ages are disposed to condemn. And when he had said this he "fell asleep;"—the usual beautiful phrase of the New Testament, to express

the death of saints, and at the same time to intimate their expectation of a happy resurrection.

The eloquence of a Cicero would be mere feebleness on this occasion. All praise is below the excellence of that spirit which shone in this first of martyrs. Let it stand as an example of the genuine temper of martyrdom, of real faith in Christ, and of real charity to men ; and let the heroes of the world, on the comparison, hide their heads in confusion.

Pontius Pilate having been disgraced, Judea seems at this time to have been without a procurator ; and Vitellius, the governor of Syria, was a man of great moderation toward the Jews. In these circumstances the mildness of the Roman government was eventually the occasion of a severe persecution to the church. The Jewish magistrates, who a little before had not the power of life and death, and could not murder the Lord of Life without the intervention of their Roman masters, were now left to themselves, at least in religious concerns, and Stephen was their first Christian victim. He was buried with great lamentation by the church ; and a considerable number suffered soon after his decease.

A young man called Saul, an Hellenist, of Tarsus, a person of an active ambitious spirit, who had been educated at Jerusalem, under Gamaliel, and outstripped all his equals in Judaical learning, distinguished himself in this persecution. He took care of the clothes of the witnesses who were employed in stoning Stephen, and made havock of the church, entering into "every house, and haling men and women, he committed them to prison ; and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them." In truth, the disciples seemed now to be left to the rage of men disposed to show them no mercy ; and a superficial observer might have supposed, that the fate of Theudas and Judas, mentioned by Gamaliel, was about to attend the Christians. Men had not yet learned that the ' blood of the martyrs was the

seed of the church.' The religious worship of the disciples must, doubtless, have suffered a grievous interruption. Indeed, none of them found it safe to remain at Jerusalem. The apostles alone thought good to stand their ground, and, by the watchful care of their God, they were preserved. The Christians, dispersed throughout Judea and Samaria, preached the word wherever they went. And thus this persecution was the first occasion of the diffusion of the gospel through various regions, and what was designed to annihilate it was overruled to extend it exceedingly. But we shall confine ourselves in this section to the church of Jerusalem.

Saul, who was all attention to the work of persecution, was vexed to hear, that a number of the Christians had escaped to Damascus, an ancient city of Syria; and he procured a commission from the high priest to bring them bound to Jerusalem. It was a considerable journey, but religious glory was his idol. But when he was near to Damascus, a sudden light from heaven, exceeding even that of the sun, arrested the daring zealot, and struck him to the ground. At the same time a voice called to him saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." In this marvellous manner did the Son of God make known his truth, his majesty, and his power, to this enterprising persecutor, and evince to all ages, what he can do to the "praise of the glory of his grace." The will of Saul was broken, and for the first time made submissive to God; "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was his cry; and whenever this is uttered from the heart, it will not fail to bring down the divine blessing. He was directed to go into Damascus, where he remained three days without sight and without food, yet constantly employed in prayer for divine grace and mercy. Thus the neces-

sity of the conviction of sin was preached to him, with circumstances more extraordinary than those which took place upon the preaching to the three thousand first converts : but the spiritual instruction conveyed was precisely the same. The work of converting grace may vary very much in non-essential circumstances ; its nature never varies. The grace of forgiveness by Jesus Christ would have been no welcome news to this Pharisee, had he still remained in the confidence of his own righteousness ; but now it was as life from the dead. After three days, by the particular direction of a vision from the Lord Jesus, Ananias, a disciple of Damascus, was sent to him with the tidings of peace. He had heard of the active malice of Saul, but was encouraged to go, by a positive declaration that Saul was a chosen vessel. Ananias opened his commission by informing Saul, that the Lord Jesus had sent him, to the end that he might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Both these effects immediately took place. Ananias exhorted him to delay no longer, but to “ wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” He was baptized, and soon refreshed both in mind and body ; and from that time the whole vehemence of his natural character, and the whole power of his intellectual faculties, which were doubtless of the first magnitude among men, were sanctified to the service of Jesus Christ ; and until his death, he was engaged in a course of labours in the church with unparalleled success. For this is he who is commonly known by the name of St. Paul, and ‘ his memorial is blessed for ever.’ He was particularly commissioned to preach to the Gentiles ; and of all the apostles he seems to have entered with the greatest penetration into the nature of Christianity. Salvation by grace through faith was his favourite theme ; a doctrine diametrically opposite to the self-righteous scheme in which he had been wont to glory. His countrymen, the Jews, were particularly

fierce in opposing this grand article of the gospel, and were stung to the quick when attacked by their once favourite champion. No doubt he had been sincere in his religion formerly, yet is he far from exculpating himself on this account. On the contrary, he magnifies the grace of the Lord Jesus, as extended to him, a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious, and the chief of sinners, in whom the long-suffering of the Lord had been exhibited, "for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe on him to life everlasting:"—that mankind may know, that God accepts sinners on Christ's account alone, and through faith in his blood; and that nothing can be more contrary to the whole design of the gospel, than to seek salvation by our own works of any kind. He seems ever after to have lamented deeply the miserable state of his countrymen, who "had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." He pitied their self-righteous notions; he knew by his own experience how deceitful such notions were to those who were under the power of them; and while he rejoiced on account of that grace which had redeemed himself from hell, he commiserated those who were fast advancing thither in fearless presumption. In the third chapter of the Philippians, he gives us a very particular view of himself. To trust in anything for salvation, except Christ alone, is, with him, "to have confidence in the flesh." No man appeared once to have had more just pretensions to such confidence than himself. His regular circumcision on the eighth day, Hebrew descent, Pharisaic strictness, zealous Judaism, and blameless morals, seemed to exalt him above the common level of his countrymen: but he declares that he "reckoned all these things as dung, that he might win Christ;" and in him alone he desires to be found, without his own righteousness to trust in; and he maintains the settled determination of his soul in this article of justification. Were it not for the per-

verse blindness of fallen nature, one might be astonished to find many persons of learning and good sense, after reading this account of the apostle by himself, still endeavouring to represent him as mixing grace and works in the subject of justification, and describing him as only excluding ceremonial works from the office of justifying a sinner. But to proceed :

Having preached Christ for three years abroad, he went up to Jerusalem. Here he attempted to join himself to the church, but the remembrance of what he had been, and the very imperfect account which they had of what he then was, prevented the Christians from receiving him, till Barnabas brought him to the apostles (two of them only, Peter and James the Lord's brother) and informed them of his genuine conversion. This cleared up all doubts; and he was now engaged in the work of the ministry at Jerusalem, and would gladly have remained there; but the Lord, by a vision, assured him, that the Jews would not receive his testimony, and that the great scene of his labours was to be among the Gentiles.

In fact, some address was needful in his brethren to save his life from the rage of the Jews, and he was conducted to his native city of Tarsus. By this time, however, the fury of persecution subsided: the Lord gave rest to his church: and the disciples both at Jerusalem and elsewhere, walked in the very best manner, in which they can walk on this side heaven, "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Where these go together, excesses of all sorts are prevented; and inward joy and outward obedience conspire to demonstrate, that there Christ reigns indeed.

Yet so slow are men to receive new divine truths, especially those which militate against old prejudices, that the Christians of Jerusalem contended with Peter on account of his intercourse with the

Gentiles of Casarea. The fierceness of Peter's natural character was now abated: with great meekness he reasoned on the case with his bigoted brethren, and convinced them, by the evident proofs of the grace of God being vouchsafed to Gentiles; that it was lawful to have communion with them. They glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance to life." Unutterable grace indeed to us, confessed at length and owned by our elder brethren the Jews! David had just reason to say, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man." Even a converted Jew admits with difficulty, that the grace of God may visit a Gentile!

The visits of Paul to Jerusalem seem to have been but short. The body of the Jewish nation sought his destruction; and his Gentile connexions and very reserved practice of Mosaiical ceremonies, rendered him no peculiar favourite in the mother-church, though they could not but "glorify the grace of God which was in him." But the church is not perfect on earth. His next return to Jerusalem was, however, of a popular kind, namely, to convey the alms of Gentile converts to the Jewish Christians oppressed by a "famine, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar." His companion to Jerusalem was Barnabas, whose liberality in the beginning had been so eminent. This service being discharged, they both returned to minister to the Gentiles.

The civil power of Judea was now in the hands of Herod Agrippa, a great favourite of the Roman emperor, a person of considerable talents, and full of that specious virtue, which, in secular annals, would entitle him to great renown. In the church of Christ he stands a persecutor; and his virtues are, in the strong but just language of Augustine, splendid sins. Yet his persecution was not the effect of a cruel

temper. Had the Jews regarded Christianity with a favourable eye, he at least would have protected it. But long before this time the general favour of the common people toward the Christians had been dissipated by the active malice of the rulers, and Christ was found to have no lasting friends, but those whom he made so by effectual grace. The first victim of this political persecution was James the son of Zebedee: he was slain with the sword, being the first of the apostles who departed from the church below, to join that which is above.

Finding that the act was popular, Herod attempted to despatch Peter also. But God had reserved him for more services; and yet, in all appearance, there was no hope of his preservation. He was imprisoned, and strictly guarded, with a view, after the passover, when the concourse of Jews at Jerusalem was very great, to have him publicly executed. The king was pleased with the idea of ingratiating himself with his subjects; but the church has arms which men of the world understand not, and they were vigorously used on this occasion.

A spirit of earnest persevering prayer was poured on the church of Jerusalem. The Lord delayed to answer till the critical moment;—a method not uncommon, of exercising the faith, and zeal, and patience of his people. By the miraculous interposition of an angel, Peter, the night before his intended execution, was delivered from prison. At first he imagined that to be only a vision, which was indeed a reality. At length being fully come to himself, and reflecting on what the Lord had done, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, a woman of eminent piety and of some opulence, where many Christians were gathered together in the religious employment of prayer. Those only, who know what the spirit of prayer is, can conceive the vehemence of wrestling, which then engaged Christian hearts. The scene which followed was at once most aston-

ishing and most pleasing. They hear a person knocking at the door; a young woman named Rhoda comes to hearken; she knows Peter's voice; joy prevents her from opening the gate; she returns to inform the supplicants, that Peter stood before it; they are induced to suspect her of insanity, rather than to believe that their prayers were heard; so slow are even the best to believe the goodness of God. She perseveres in her first assertion; It must then, say they, be his angel. Peter continues knocking; they open at length; they behold him, and are astonished. Having waved his hand, and brought them to silence, he informs them of the Lord's wonderful interposition in his favour. Go, says he, and show these things to James, and the brethren. James, who was the Lord's brother, with himself and John had the greatest concern in the government of the mother church at that time. Peter retires then to a place of concealment.

Little did Herod apprehend that his own death should precede that of his prisoner. On a public occasion, in which he appeared in great splendour, he delivered an oration, so pleasing to his audience, that they shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." That moment he was smitten with an incurable disease by an angel, because he "gave not God the glory." That pride and ambition, which had gained him the character of a patriot, orator, and statesman, were punished with death by him, who "seeth not as man seeth;" and he fell, a warning to princes, not to seek glory in opposition to God.

The next memorable circumstance in the history of the mother-church will deserve our particular attention. This was the first Christian council. The controversy which occasioned it, involved a subject of vast consequence in real religion.

About twenty years had elapsed since the effusion of the Spirit had commenced; a period of time in which, even in the midst of one of the most wicked

nations in the world, in Jerusalem and in its neighbourhood, God had erected his kingdom in the hearts of thousands who had lived in great unanimity and charity, "keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," conscious of their divine Master's spiritual presence, and rejoicing in hope of his second coming to complete their felicity. In his strength, they had sustained, with much patience, two very severe persecutions, in the former of which a deacon, in the second an apostle, had sealed the truth with their blood. In an earlier part of this period their holy harmony had been a little interrupted by a secular contention: but this was soon composed. The time was not yet arrived, when those who called themselves Christians, could so much forget the dignity of their profession, as to contend passionately for worldly things. The present controversy had a more intimate connexion with the Christian religion itself, and therefore seemed more likely to disturb the union of men, with whom spiritual objects were the chief ground of concern. The Jews were strongly attached to their own religious national peculiarities. Under the influence of pride, envy, and other evil passions, this disposition supported the spirit of self-righteousness. Nothing could be more contrary to the genius of the gospel than the attempt of some Christian Jews, who endeavoured to infuse into the Gentile converts an idea of the necessity of circumcision, and of obedience to the whole of the Mosaic ceremonial, in order to salvation. Some of the Pharisees themselves were now real Christians, but they were displeased to see and hear of so many Gentiles admitted into the Christian church, and regarded by the apostles as on an equal footing with themselves in the favour of God. Thus were their minds darkened with respect to the article of justification; and, before they were aware, by thus insisting on the necessity of circumcision, they practically averred, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was not

sufficient for man's salvation; that the favour of God was to be purchased by human works, in part at least; and that their ritual observances contributed to their acceptance with God.

This was the first time that the natural pride and ignorance of the human heart, disguised under the pretence of religious zeal, attempted to undermine the simplicity of the faith, by which, hitherto, Christians had rested with complacency on Jesus alone, had enjoyed peace of conscience, and had been constrained to obedience by love. The apostles Paul and Barnabas looked on the growing evil with a jealous eye, and after no small fruitless altercation with the zealots, thought it better to refer the full consideration of the question to a council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem. And now Paul returned to Jerusalem, the third time since his conversion, and about seventeen years after it; and, in his progress with Barnabas, reported the conversion of the Gentiles, which gave great joy to the Christian Jews in general.

At the council, Peter, who had returned to Jerusalem, and since Agrippa's death was no longer molested, opened the debate by observing, that a considerable time ago, God had selected him to preach to the Gentiles, and had blessed his labours with unequivocal success, in purifying their hearts by faith, and in dispensing the Holy Ghost among them, no less than on the Jews. After God himself had thus decided, he said it appeared presumptuous in any person to impose a yoke on the Gentiles, from which the divine indulgence had exempted them. He insisted that the yoke itself, especially when laid on the conscience as necessary to salvation, was intolerable: and he concluded, that even they, who still, for charitable and prudential reasons, persisted in the ritual observances, were yet obliged to repose for salvation only on the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," as well as these Gentiles, who never had

observed them at all. This full testimony of Peter was supported by Paul and Barnabas, who gave ample proof of the divine grace vouchsafed to the Gentiles. James, who seems to have been the standing pastor of Jerusalem, confirmed the same argument, by the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeably to Peter's declaration of the mercy of God in visiting the Gentiles. He gave his opinion, that the Gentiles should no longer be molested with notions subversive of the grace of God, and tending to teach them dependence on human works instead of the atonement of Christ for salvation. Only he recommended, that the council should direct them to abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For the number of Jews dispersed through Gentile cities, who heard Moses read every Sabbath-day, required these precautions.

A letter was sent according to these views; nor does it appear that there was one dissenting voice in the council. It is remarkable, that the synod used this striking expression of censure against the zealots, they "troubled you with words, subverting your souls." Certainly the charitable apostles would not so strongly have rebuked a trifling error. Nor is there, I think, any other method of understanding this aright, but on the principle already stated, that the harm did not consist in practising these ceremonies, though virtually abrogated by the death of Christ. For these were practised by the apostles themselves, constantly by such as lived in Judea, and occasionally by the rest. The real fault was the depending upon them for salvation, in opposition to the grace of Christ. Here the apostles knew it behoved them to be jealous, that God might be glorified, and souls comforted: and the joy, and consolation, and establishment in the faith, which ensued amongst the Gentiles, confirms this interpretation.

It is to be feared, that the Church of Jerusalem received not all the benefit which was to be wished, from the wisdom and charity of the council, though it doubtless would be of service to many. But its most wholesome effects were felt among the Gentiles. The account which we have in the Epistle to the Galatians, leads us to suspect that the self-righteous spirit had a very deep influence among some members of the church at Jerusalem. The apostle Paul was obliged to exercise a particular caution among them, and to confer in private with the pillars of the church, lest he should give umbrage to the Jewish Christians, and injure his own usefulness among his countrymen. In this he acted with equal prudence and charity: yet nothing could induce him to act inconsistently with the faith. To press the Gentile converts to Jewish conformity, appeared to him in this light, as no reasons but those of peace, charity, and prudential expediency, could be pleaded for the continuance of such observances, even among Jews: and therefore among Gentiles, who never had been under the yoke, no other construction could be put on the practice, than that it was necessary to salvation, and that the primary doctrine of the Christian religion, the sufficiency of the blood of Christ for the pardon of sin, was disbelieved. The same apostle, therefore, who, on another occasion circumcised Timothy because of the Jews in the neighbourhood, he being by the mother's side of Hebrew extraction, now insisted that Titus, a perfect Gentile, should not be circumcised, because of false brethren, who had craftily introduced themselves among the Christians, with a view to undermine their dependence on Jesus, and to draw them back to the self-righteousness of Judaism. The liberty of Christ was what he was zealous to support; and he would not, for an hour, allow any self-righteous mixtures, "that the truth of the gospel might continue with them;" an expression, which throws farther light on the con-

troversy we have reviewed; and shows distinctly, that not circumcision itself, but the dependence on it for salvation, in the room of Christ, was the great object of the apostle's opposition.

He had hitherto found, to his satisfaction, that all his brethren of the apostolic college had heartily concurred in checking the progress of self-righteousness. But a lamentable instance of human imbecility soon appeared. Peter, after having taken a social meal with some Gentile converts, afterwards withdrew from their company, on the arrival of certain Jewish zealots, who came to him from James: and thus, for fear of their censure, he durst not keep company with men, whose fellowship he yet inwardly revered, and expected to enjoy in heaven. An error committed by a respectable character is infectious. Other Jews dissembled in a similar way,—even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation, and the truth of the gospel was in danger of being forsaken on the authority of those, who had hitherto upheld its standard in the world. Such infirmities of the wise and good prove, beyond doubt, to whom alone we are indebted for the preservation of Christian truth in the earth. The Lord roused the spirit of Paul on the occasion: he vindicated the truth of the gospel by an open and manly rebuke of Peter: and thus a seasonable check was put to the growing torrent of Pharisaism,—that dark but deadly foe of the gospel,—which, in one form or another, is ever ready to cloud the light of truth, and to sap the foundation of Christian peace and life.

St. Paul's fourth visit to Jerusalem is but just mentioned in scripture. His fifth was attended with more memorable events. It was seen by the spirit of prophecy, that he would undergo bitter persecution from the infidel Jews: and the guarded kindness with which he was received by many, even of the believers there, formed no pleasing inducement

to him to repeat his visits. But divine charity prevailed in St. Paul's mind over all objections, difficulties, and dangers: he rebuked his friends at Cæsarea, who dissuaded him from prosecuting his journey, by professing his readiness "not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." His resignation silenced them: they said, "the will of the Lord be done." On his arrival he went to James, and in the presence of all the elders, recounted the work of God among the Gentiles. They glorified the Lord, and rejoiced sincerely on the account: but at the same time they expressed what concern it gave them, to find how jealous of Paul the brethren were, having heard a false report of his teaching all the Jews to forsake the Mosaic observances. Doubtless he had not done this; but he had done what displeased the Jewish zealots: he had insisted on the exemption of Gentiles from the yoke; and men, once out of humour, are disposed to hearken to malevolent exaggerations. In this exigency the advice of James was at the same time prudent and charitable, namely, that he should join with four men, who were bound by a Nazarite vow, in the customary services of the temple, till a sacrifice should be offered for each of them. With this Paul concurred; and thus he gave the clearest proof that he was ready to conform both to Jew and Gentile in things indifferent, with a view to promote the salvation of men.

II.—ANTIOCH AND SOME OTHER ASIATIC CHURCHES.

THE three provinces of the Holy Land,—Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria, received the gospel from Jerusalem, but of their early history it has not pleased the Spirit to afford us any detailed account. Samaria also, by the preaching of the deacon Philip (Acts viii. 8,) was made partaker of "the common

salvation:” and by the hands of Peter and John received the Holy Ghost. Of Ethiopia we may also conclude that the “good news” were conveyed to that distant land by the Eunuch, the minister of the Queen Candace, with whom Philip was made to meet, when travelling in the desert, south of Samaria. But though the apostles thought it their duty to continue to water the flocks of Judea and Galilee, and to look on Jerusalem as a sort of central metropolis to them all, they encouraged the inferior pastors, who fled from the rage of persecution, to disseminate the gospel in Gentile regions. Damascus, we have seen, reaped the benefit of this dispensation, and so did Tarsus. Some travelled as far as Phenice, Cyrus, and Antioch, still preaching only to Jews. At length certain Cypriot and Cyrenian Jews ventured to break through the pale of distinction: and at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, they preached the Lord Jesus to the Gentiles. The Greek language here prevailed, and, on this account, the inhabitants were called Grecians, being the descendants of a Macedonian colony, planted there by the successor of Alexander the Great. And now the Lord, willing to overcome effectually the reluctances of self-righteous bigotry, attended their ministry with remarkable success. The idolaters felt the renovating power of the gospel, and in great numbers turned to the Lord. The mother-church hearing of this, sent Barnabas, whose piety and charity were renowned, to carry on and propagate a work which required more labourers. His benevolent heart was feasted with the prospect; and the reality of salvation by the grace of Christ thus exemplified in persons, who had hitherto been involved in Pagan darkness, was evidenced in a manner which, till then, had never been known. Finding many converts, he exhorted them to perseverance; and the addition of believers was still so large, that he began to look out for a coadjutor. He sought for Saul, who was then la-

bouring at Tarsus perhaps with no great success; we are told of none at least; "for a prophet is not honoured in his own country;" and he brought him to Antioch. This populous city employed them a whole year. Here Christian societies were regularly formed, consisting, in a great measure, of Gentiles. And here the followers of Christ were first called Christians. It is not probable that they would give themselves that name. The terms BRETHREN, ELECT, FAITHFUL, SAINTS, were the names which they would rather approve. The name of Christian seems to have been given by their adversaries. It is now a term of honour: at that time a more opprobrious one could scarcely be thought of by the learned and the polite. Were a man allowed to possess many good qualities; "but he is a Christian," would have been deemed more than a counterbalance to them all. And other terms invented by the malevolence of unregenerate men, in different ages, to stigmatize the same sort of persons, have produced, by the bare sound, similar effects on prejudiced minds.

The faith of the Antiochians was signally operative. Warmed with the love of Christ, and rejoicing in the prospect of heavenly treasures, they cheerfully contributed to the relief of the poor Christians in Judea, distressed by a famine. A large extension of Christ's kingdom in any place, naturally calls together a large number of pastors. It is pleasant indeed to labour among the faithful, encircled with sincere friends. It is not every real saint who has the fortitude and charity to quit so agreeable a scene, for the sake of breaking up fresh ground. How much longer these teachers would have remained at Antioch, if left to themselves, we know not. But the Holy Ghost now selected Barnabas and Saul for other labours. They obeyed the call; and Seleucia in the neighbourhood was their first destination. At this port they found a convenient passage to the fertile and voluptuous island

of Cyprus. Methinks the evil spirits, who there supported the religious rites and the sensual practices of the devotees of Venus, began to tremble for this capital scene of their dominions.

From Salamis, the eastern point of the island, to Paphos the western, they spread the glad tidings of the gospel. In this last place they found Elymas, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet, in company with Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of the island, a man of sense and candour, who sent for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. The sorcerer endeavoured to prevent the good effects of their labours; till Paul, full of holy indignation at his diabolical malice, was enabled miraculously to strike him blind for a season. Sergius was astonished, we are told, "at the DOCTRINE" of the Lord, and became a Christian from that hour.

Pisidia, lying to the north of Pamphylia, was the next scene. Here was another Antioch; and the apostles on the Sabbath-day attended the Jewish synagogue. After the usual reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers gave them a friendly invitation to exhort the people, which Paul embraced with his usual zeal. His sermon is much of the same strain with those of Peter, and of Stephen, tending to beget in the hearers a conviction of sinfulness, and to give testimony to Jesus, concluding with a remarkably plain declaration of the grand doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus only, and a solemn warning against the dreadful consequences of hardness of heart, and of contempt of the divine message. The Gentiles, powerfully impressed with the new doctrine, desired to hear more on the subject the next Sabbath. Many Jews and proselytes were converted; and almost the whole city came on the next Sabbath-day to hear. The sight was too much for the envy of the infidel Jews, who opposed Paul with all their might. The two apostles boldly assured them, that though it was their duty to carry

the news of salvation to the Jews first, yet as they despised God's gift of eternal life, it would now be offered to the Gentiles; agreeably to the glorious prophecy of Isaiah, in which the experimental influence of the gospel on Gentile hearts is clearly described. The Pagans, not so proud as the Jews, felt that they had no righteousness to plead before God, thankfully embraced the gospel, and believed in great numbers.

Pisidia was now full of the gospel; and the apostles proceeded with vast success, till a persecution, stirred up by the Jews, induced some self-righteous women of rank, in conjunction with the magistrates, to drive them out of their coasts. From thence they came to Iconium, the northern extremity of the country; and the disciples whom they left, though harassed with persecution, were yet "filled with joy and the Holy Ghost." The internal consolations of their religion supported their souls. In Iconium the two apostles continued a long time, and delivered the message of divine reconciliation with much freedom and energy, to the conversion of a great multitude both of Jews and Gentiles. The unbelieving Jews exerted their usual malevolence, and filled the Gentiles with the strongest prejudices against the Christians. In truth, their conduct, though by no means uncommon, affords a dreadful instance of human depravity. It cannot be denied, that those Jews must in religious knowledge have far exceeded the idolatrous inhabitants of Iconium. They held the unity of the Godhead; they worshipped him in their synagogue; they heard his precepts from Sabbath to Sabbath, out of the law of Moses and the prophets. They must have known thus far, that the Messiah was foretold in the latter, and they could not but be acquainted with their duty both to God and man in many respects by means of the former. Yet so unreasonable are they, as to labour to prevent their Pagan neighbours from

being instructed in any thing that deserved the name of religion, and to persecute with unceasing acrimony two of their own countrymen, who agreed with them in the profession of the worship of the one living and true God. Of so little influence is what some call the "Unitarian" religion, if it be unconnected with the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Persons, who make THAT the whole of their religion, can, it seems, rather see mankind remain buried in the depths of the most senseless idolatry in worship, and of vicious profligacy in life, than brought over to the real Christian religion, to the hearty renunciation of their own righteousness, and to a humble dependence on the atoning blood of Jesus! The preaching of Paul and Barnabas excited a variety of speculations in this city. The Gentiles were divided; and part ranged themselves with the Jews, and part with the apostles. But the former had the advantage for the present, because they had the arms—which Christian soldiers cannot use—of violence and persecution.

The apostles, aware of their designs, fled into Lycaonia, a country to the east of Pisidia; and there preached the gospel, particularly in Lystra and Derbe. In the former of these places, a poor cripple, who never had had the use of his feet, heard Paul with the most respectful attention, and was so far wrought upon already in his mind, as to believe that there was virtue in the name of Jesus Christ to heal him. To confirm him in his yet infant views of the Christian religion, to attest the truth, and to convince men that Jesus was both able and willing to SAVE, Paul was enable by a word to restore the man to the full use of his limbs. Immediately these poor idolaters concluded, that the gods were come down to them in the likeness of men. Through this whole country of Asia Minor, the Greek literature, and with it the numerous fables of Hellenistic vanity, *abounded*. They had heard of Jupiter and Mercury

particularly as visiting mankind ; and now Barnabas, as the elder perhaps, and more majestic figure of the two, must, they conceived, be Jupiter ; and Paul, as the more eloquent speaker, must be Mercury, the classical god of eloquence. The priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and, together with the people, would have done sacrifice to the apostles. It was a grievous circumstance ; but our grief and regret is mitigated, when we reflect that one of the finest opportunities was given to Paul and Barnabas of demonstrating the spirit of real godliness. However pleasing it might be to corrupt nature to receive the idolatrous homage of a deluded people, nothing could be more abhorrent from the nature of the gospel itself, and from the humble character of its teachers. They could not bear the sight : they rent their clothes ; and ran in among the people, and expostulated with them on the absurdity of their conduct ; assuring them that they were no more than frail men like themselves, and that their intention in preaching to them was, to turn them from these vanities to the living God, who formerly indeed had left all nations to follow their own ways, but now had sent his servants to preach a method of salvation from such idolatries. Not that the worship of false gods was excusable ; the constant benefits of providence calling for thankfulness, and pointing out the supreme Creator to the consciences of men. Thus faithfully did they preach conviction of sin to the Lycaonians, and with difficulty prevent the actual performance of the sacrifice, which would have given them more pain than the persecution that followed.

The fickle multitude, who had so recently been even idolatrously attached to Paul and Barnabas, were soon persuaded by some Jews, who came from Antioch and Iconium, to harbour the worst opinions of them ; and, doubtless, the dislike of secular glory, which these excellent apostles, with a truly Christian

spirit, showed on all occasions, would not a little contribute to increase this alienation of mind. In a tumult Paul was stoned, and dragged out of the city, as a dead corpse; and while the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city, miraculously restored, as it seems; and he departed the next day with Barnabas to Derbe. There many were converted; and the persecuting spirit intermitting, they visited again, in circuit, the regions of Pisidia and Lycaonia, encouraging the disciples to persevere in the faith of Jesus in confidence of divine support, and in full expectation of the kingdom of heaven, into which real Christians must not expect to enter without much tribulation.

They now ordained some of the brethren to minister in every church, and devoutly recommended both pastors and flocks to the care of that gracious Lord on whom they believed. Solemn fasting and prayer were used on this occasion. Returning through Pamphylia, they preached again at Perga, and from Attalia sailed to the greater Antioch, whence they had been, by the prayers of the church, recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.

Here they remained a considerable time previous to their attendance at the council of Jerusalem, after which they returned to the same church in company with Judas and Silas, who, with authority from the mother-church, confirmed them in the liberty of the gospel, in conjunction with many other teachers. The Christians of Antioch walked now in genuine consolation, and while they dared to rest on Christ alone, they practised good works in a filial spirit. Thankful for the assistance of Judas and Silas, they dismissed them to the apostles who had sent them. Silas, however, loved his situation, and remained in the service of the Gentiles.

Some days after, Paul proposed to Barnabas a *second circuitous* visit of the Asiatic churches. Bar-

nabas, fond of Mark, his nephew, proposed to take him with them. Paul, remembering his former desertion, thought him unfit for the work. On which side there was more blame in this contest, may be hard to determine. Probably both were too positive; but to us at this distance of time, Paul's view of the question seems the most just. The consequence was a separation between those two Christian leaders; and it does not appear that they ever saw each other afterwards, though it ought not to be doubted, but that on the whole their mutual esteem and regard continued. The progress of the gospel was not however retarded. Barnabas sailed with Mark to Cyprus, and here he is dismissed from the sacred memoirs. Paul took with him Silas, having the recommendation of the brethren to the grace of God, which would lead one to conclude, that the Antiochians preferred his course to that of Barnabas. He now went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

In Lycaonia, he found the pious Timothy, whom he took as an associate, and confirmed the Gentile converts every where in Christian Liberty. Thus the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

III.—GALATIA.

THE love of God, where it rules in an ardent degree, is insatiable. The apostle's heart is not content with the trophies already erected in many parts of Asia Minor. As the miser thinks no acquisitions great, while any prospects of farther gain are still open to his view, so Paul could not with complacency rest in the attainments already made, while so much ground still lay before him, to the north and to the west, in the hands of Satan. He travelled throughout Phrygia and Galatia. The plantation of the churches in the former country will afterwards engage our attention.

the latter, whose history in point of time is much sooner concluded in sacred story, will be now most conveniently exhibited. The epistle written to that church affords us almost the only materials we have ; but little as they are, they are inestimable.

The people of this country received the gospel in great numbers, insomuch that several churches were planted through the district. They understood St. Paul's doctrine, and received it in its true sense, namely, that justification before God is attainable only by faith in Christ crucified. He clearly laid before them the riches of divine grace. And they had so deep an impression of the truths which he taught, and felt so much of their energy, that they seemed as it were to see the Son of God crucified among them : they received the promised Spirit of adoption, by which they rejoiced in God as their Father, and they cheerfully suffered much persecution for the name of Christ. Before this they had lived in the darkest idolatry ; for these churches were formed almost, if not entirely, of Gentiles. The true God was made known to them, and Unitarianism, of itself unable to emancipate men from sin, as the case of the Jews evinced, was with them attended with the distinct knowledge and lively faith of Jesus.

What proves the divine taste of this people was, that no disadvantage in the circumstances of the delivery of the gospel operated with them to its prejudice. Some remarkable infirmity this great man was afflicted with ; of its precise nature we are nowhere told : but it presented something contemptible in the eyes of profane persons. And it is no small proof of the Galatians being much humbled and awakened in their minds by the Spirit of God, that this circumstance lessened not at all their regard to the apostle or to his message. " They received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." They confessed the blessedness which they felt on account of

the gospel, and were ready to give even the most painful proofs of their affection to him. In all this we see what the gospel is, what it does for men who truly understand and embrace it in an humbled heart; what was St. Paul's manner of preaching, and how different a thing Christianity then appeared from the frigid speculations which in modern times bear that name.

But soon after Paul had left them with the most pleasing hopes of their spiritual growth, he was astonished to hear of a change for the worse, which took place among them. Some Jews, who were either their own countrymen, or who had lately arrived at Galatia from other parts of Asia Minor where Paul had laboured, took pains to pervert them. They made no attempts, indeed, to unsettle their minds in the views of the unity of the Godhead, and the principal facts of Christianity; nor did they endeavour to draw them back to the worship of idols. They neither formally denied the atonement of Christ, nor persuaded the people to desist from Christian worship. Yet was it another gospel, though it deserved not the name of gospel, to the love of which they seduced them. They assured them that they could not be saved without circumcision, and prevailed on them to Judaize so far, as to observe the rites of Moses in various instances. They took pains to estrange them from Paul, and to draw them over to themselves, and to a worldly spirit of conformity; loving to appear fair in the eyes of men, and pretending to be zealous for good works, while their real view was to avoid the persecution, which attended a declared attachment to the cross of Christ. To give the better effect to their insinuations, they instilled into them disrespectful ideas of Paul, as though he were far inferior to the other apostles; and, as it seems, they represented the mother-church of Jerusalem, with the college of apostles there, as coinciding with themselves in doctrine.

Thus the self-righteous poison, which first issued from Jerusalem, was brought into this distant province, where the ignorance and simplicity of the people, unacquainted with Jewish modes and habits, gave it the freest room to operate. These false teachers still called themselves Christians, and the mischief which they introduced, may be deemed at first sight no great one. But the great evil lurking under all this art and zeal was the adulteration of the faith of Jesus, the sole author of our salvation. In no epistle does the apostle speak so sharply, or express himself so vehemently. His exhortations and rebukes came warm from a charitable heart, just after the reception of the disagreeable tidings. He professes himself astonished at the defection of the Galatians from Christ; and execrates any man or even angel, who should preach any other way of salvation. If such a person still call himself a Christian, and hold the historical facts of the gospel, the case is not altered for the better; the deception only passing more current on that account. He asserts, that if they mixed circumcision, or any work of the law, with Christ in the article of justification, Christ would be of no effect to them. He must be their whole Saviour, or he would profit them nothing; law and grace in this case being quite opposite. He marks the mere worldly nature of the doctrine they were embracing: it would make them bigotted Jews indeed, proud, self-righteous, void of the love of God and man, and no better in their spiritual state than they were while idolaters. Thus they would lose all the liberty of the gospel, and be mere slaves in religion, like all unconverted persons, who in reality are self-righteous, and devoid of holy principle. He points out to them the peculiar nature of the gospel, as perfectly distinct from any thing that man in his depraved state is apt to teach or ready to embrace. In the historical part of the epistle, he vindicates his own apostolical character, inculcates throughout, in

all possible variety of language, and with his usual copiousness both of clear argument and strong diction, the all-important article of justification, and presses the necessity of continuing in it, in order to be benefitted by it. Otherwise, we make Christ the minister of sin, or of condemnation: we build again what we have destroyed; and, as far as in us lies, make him to have died in vain. He appeals to their own experience of the happy fruits of the gospel, which they had felt internally, and represents himself as travailing in birth for them, till Christ be formed in them. He expresses himself dubious of their condition, and desirous of visiting them, that he might adapt his language to their perilous situation. He wishes that their evil advisers were cut off, so mischievous were they to souls; and assures them, that the divine vengeance would overtake those that troubled them. He informs them, that the persecution which he himself endured, was on account of this very doctrine. This it was that stirred up the enmity of the human heart; and this doctrine being lost, the gospel becomes a mere name, and Christianity is lost in the group of common religions.

It will be proper for us to bear in mind the apostle's reasonings on this subject, and to apply them to every period of church history; since it is evident, that the rise or fall of this great Christian article, must determine the vigour or decline of true religion in all ages. He neglects not, however, to inculcate in his usual manner the necessity of good works, as the just fruits and evidences of a real Christian state; and he particularly encourages them to works of mercy, attended with a patient and cheerful prospect into eternity, and animated with genuine charity.

There is reason to hope, that the best effects were produced by this epistle. No very long time after, the apostle again visited these churches, and went over the whole country, strengthening "all the dis-

ciples.” This is the substance of what I can collect from scripture concerning the history of this church,—except a single hint in another epistle, in which he recommends to the Corinthians to use the same plan for the relief of the poor saints, which he had suggested to the Galatians. From the influence which he hence appears to have had in Galatia, it is probable, that the Judaical perversion was overcome.

IV.—PHILIPPI.

THE dispensation of the gospel is doubtless the greatest blessing that can be vouchsafed to any country. But the times and the seasons God hath reserved to himself. Even in this sense salvation is of grace; and divine providence alone orders and appoints, that the gospel shall be preached here or there, as he pleases. Paul and Silas, if left to themselves, in their progress to the west, would have evangelized Pergamus or Asia Propria and Bithynia, but were prevented by special intimations of the Holy Spirit. They came now to Troas,—so called from its being the place, or near the place, where old Troy had stood, by the sea-coast,—uncertain whither they should go next, and perhaps little apprehensive that God, now for the first time, was introducing his gospel into Europe. A nightly vision, in which a Macedonian intreated Paul to come over into his country and help them, determined at once their destination. They sailed from Troas to the Island of Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, a Macedonian sea-port, whence, through the gulf of Strymon, they came to Philippi, the first city of that part of Macedonia, which they would meet with in their way from Neapolis. So I understand St. Luke’s expression Πρωτη; for Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. The city of Philippi, though originally Macedonian, and so named from Philip the father of Alexander, was

then a Roman colony, inhabited by Roman citizens, and regulated by Roman laws and customs. The region in which it stood, had been renowned for constituting the third of the four great monarchies under the arms of Alexander, and the place itself had been something more than half a century before, the scene of a famous battle, between two Roman parties engaged in a civil war. Neither of those seasons would have been at all convenient for the gospel. The present was a scene of tranquillity and order under the Roman government: and Macedonia, though now only a Roman province, was going to be the subject of transactions infinitely more noble than those, which adorn the history of its greatest princes.

The appearances on their arrival did not promise any thing remarkable. They spent a few days at first with little prospect of success. They found a few Jews there, who used on the Sabbath day to frequent an oratory out of the city by the river side: and some women, religiously disposed, resorted thither. It was the constant method of the apostles to join themselves to Unitarians, wherever they could find them, as the first opening for the gospel of Christ. They did so on this occasion, and spake to the women. One of them was Lydia, a person of some property. Her heart the Lord opened, that "she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." She was baptized with her family; and with affectionate importunity she prevailed on the apostle and his companions to make her house their home in Philippi. Here we have the beginnings of the Philippian church; but the conversion was sound and stable, and the progress of Lydia in the divine life seems of the same kind as that of Cornelius. Vexed at the prospect, Satan employed a young woman possessed with a spirit of Python to bring the gospel into contempt. She constantly followed the Christian preachers, and bore them the

most honourable testimony. Paul was grieved, as being fully sensible of the ill effect, which a supposed union between Christ and Python¹ must occasion in the minds of men. He was at length enabled miraculously to eject the demon. The proprietors of the young woman, who had made a traffic of her oracular powers, finding that she was dispossessed of the demon, wreaked their vengeance on Paul and Silas, and by slanderous accusations induced the magistrates to scourge them severely, and to commit them to prison. The jailor thrust them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

In this situation, distressing indeed, and in the eyes of many contemptible, these two servants of God, at midnight, though oppressed with pain and hunger and every disagreeable circumstance, were yet enabled to pray and sing praises to God. So powerful are the consolations of the Holy Ghost and so much did the love of Christ constrain them! And now the Lord caused a great earthquake, which opened all the doors of the prison, and loosed every one's bonds. The jailor awaking, in his first trepidation, by a practice which I wish had been creditable among pagans only, was about to destroy himself. Paul kindly assured him that none of the prisoners had escaped. And now being struck with horror at the thought of the world to come, to which he had been hastening in all his guilt, and being divinely convinced of his danger, he came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and asked what he must do to be saved. The answer was plain and direct. Why do any persons who call themselves Christian ministers ever give any other? "Believe in the Lord Jesus

¹ The very term leads me to apprehend, that the oracular work of the Pythian Apollo among the pagans had something diabolical in it; and the story before us demonstrates the reality of such delusions and that human fraud and sagacity alone are not sufficient to account for them.

Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." They then instructed him and his household in the nature of the gospel, and opened to him the doctrine of forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ. His conversion appears evidently of the same kind as that of the three thousand at Jerusalem. He was humbled for his sins, and he received pardon by faith in Jesus. His ready submission to baptism, his affectionate treatment of those, who had just before been the objects of his severity, and his joy in the Lord, demonstrated that he was turned from Satan to God.—His whole family shared with him in the same blessings.

In the morning, the magistrates sent an order for the dismissal of the prisoners. But Paul thought it not inconsistent with Christian meekness, to demand from them an apology for their illegal behaviour to Roman citizens; for such it seems Silas was, as well as Paul. The magistrates, alarmed, came personally to make concessions, which were easily accepted. Being dismissed from prison, they entered into Lydia's house, comforted the disciples, and left Philippi for the present.

Some years after, the apostle again visited the Philippians, and found them still in a flourishing state. He always took a peculiar pleasure in this church; and, in his epistle written from Rome, he thanks God for their sincere fellowship in the gospel from the beginning. He expresses his expectation of liberty, and of being enabled to see them again, and exhorts them to bear patiently the persecutions to which they were exposed, as being an evidence of the divine favour.

Liberality was a shining virtue among these converts. They had sent once and again to his relief at Thessalonica. And now they had sent Epaphroditus to Rome, to minister to his wants. A dangerous illness had brought that disciple to the borders of the grave. Upon his recovery he was afflicted to this

of the distress, which the news of his sickness must have brought on the minds of the Philippians. Paul was therefore the more anxious to send him back. The sensibility of that love, with which the Holy Ghost had influenced all concerned in this affair, is finely described in this part of the epistle. The apostle, toward the close of it, even exults in the pleasure which the charity of these disciples gave him; and he assures them, that his God would “supply all their need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He warns them, however, against the dangers of seduction. Judaizing teachers desired to pervert them. He reminds them, therefore, of his own simple dependence on the Lord Jesus, though he had fairer pretensions than most men to self-righteousness; and with tears in his eyes declares, that even then, many pretended Christians walked like enemies of the cross of Christ.

Such was the work of God at Philippi. A considerable number of persons, once worshippers of idols, devoted to the basest lusts, and sunk in the grossest ignorance, were brought to the knowledge and love of the true God, and to the hope of salvation by his Son Jesus. In this faith and hope they persevered amidst a world of persecutions, steadily brought forth the fruits of charity, and lived in the joyful expectation of a blessed resurrection.

V. THESSALONICA.

OF Amphipolis and Apollonia, the next cities of Macedonia through which St. Paul passed, nothing particular is recorded. But at Thessalonica another European church was formed, inferior in solid piety to none in the primitive times. This city had been rebuilt by Philip of Macedon, and had its name from his conquest of Thessaly. Here Paul followed his usual practice of preaching first to the Jews in their

synagogue; and he spent the first three Sabbaths in pointing out the evidences of Christianity. The custom of the Jews, in allowing any of their countrymen to exhort in their synagogues, gave the apostle an easy opportunity of preaching to this people, till their accustomed enmity and obstinacy began to exert itself. Some of the Jews were, however converted, and a great multitude of religious Gentiles, who used to attend the synagogue, and not a few females of quality. So difficult is it for even Satan himself to erase all perception of the one true God from the minds of men, so powerful is the voice of natural conscience, and so totally unreasonable is the polytheism of the pagans, that notwithstanding the extreme depravity of human nature, we find, wherever the Jews carried on the public worship of the God of Israel, it was common for some Gentiles to join in their worship. Within the bounds of the Holy Land there were a number of this sort. And I observe through the whole tenor of Josephus's history, that the Romans treated with respect what the Jews held sacred, and whoever was distinguished by any religious thoughtfulness from others, such a one found nothing to suit him in Gentile rites, but preferred the worship of the Jews. The devout Greeks converted at Thessalonica were of this class; and this is not the first instance we have seen of the Lord's preparing persons, by an attention to a more imperfect light, for the Sun of Righteousness. But HE is not confined to one method. The major part of the Thessalonian converts were idolaters, who now turned to the living and true God, in the faith and hope of Jesus, who "delivered them from the wrath to come." Faith, hope, and charity evinced this people to be God's elect: the word came to their hearts in much power and assurance; and, though it exposed them to great affliction, this did not prevent their joy of the Holy Ghost.

The restless Jews were not ashamed to join with

the most profligate Pagans in persecuting the new converts; and decent hypocrites and open sinners were, once more, seen united in opposing the church of God. They assaulted the house of Jason, at whose house Paul and his companions were entertained. Precautions having been used to secrete them, Jason and some other Christians were brought before the magistrates, and calumniated with the usual charge of sedition. The Roman governors, however, were content with exacting a security from Jason and his friends for the peace of the state. But the apostle knew too well the malice of the Jews to confide in any present appearances of moderation; and therefore felt himself obliged abruptly to leave the infant church. The first epistle, however, which he sent to them not long after, plainly proves that they were not without pastors, whom he charges them to honour and obey.

The growth of this people in godliness was soon renowned through the Christian world. Their persecution appears to have been grievous; and hence the comfort of God their Saviour, and the prospect of the invisible world, became more precious to them. The apostle made two attempts to return to them, but was as often disappointed by the malice of Satan. Fearing, lest the weight of affliction might crush their religion in its infancy, he sent Timothy to them, to establish and comfort them. From him, on his return, he learnt the strength of their faith and love, and their affectionate remembrance of the apostle, whose benevolent effusions of joy and gratitude on the occasion exceed all encomium. The influence of the Holy Spirit in enlightening, comforting, and invigorating this church, seemed in a good measure to supply any want of pastoral instruction, in which, from their circumstances, they might probably be defective. They were taught of God to love one another, and they exercised this brotherly affection in the strongest manner toward all around.

In his second epistle he congratulates them on their great proficiency in faith and love: and, while he comforts them with the prospect of the second coming of Christ, he takes occasion to correct a mistake, into which they had fallen from what he had mentioned in his former epistle, of imagining that the last day was at hand. Men, who had suddenly passed from the grossest ignorance, into the full blaze of gospel-day, might easily make such a mistake, especially since their affections were not so strongly captivated with heavenly objects, and since they found so little in a world of persecution to cheer their minds. There appears only one fault in this people which he thought necessary to rebuke. He intimated something of it in the former epistle; in the latter he was more express. It was the want of industry in their callings, with which he charged some of them; for this was not a general evil. How they might fall into it, is easy to conceive. Persons all alive for God and his Christ, and knowing little of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the craft of Satan, might find it irksome to attend to the concerns of this life. It was a fault, indeed, and very dangerous, if persisted in; but as it was, in all probability, soon corrected, and in part occasioned by the strength of heavenly affections, one cannot be very severe in censuring them.

This church bears the strongest marks of godliness, the effect of no common effusion of the Spirit. They adorned the gospel, with faith, hope, and charity; yet showed, by their faults and ignorance, the importance of diligent pastoral instruction, which their circumstances suffered them not to abound; and which, under God, would have soon cured the former, and removed the latter. They were exposed to such blemishes, as are most apt to attend great attainments in the divine life, made with vast rapidity.

It appears, that St. Paul visited this people

a later period, and gave them much exhortation; but we have no particular further account of them.

VI.—BEREÄ AND ATHENS.

PAUL was conducted from Thessalonica to Berea, a city of Macedonia. Here also was a Jewish synagogue, and here, for the first time, the preaching of the cross was candidly received by Jews. A very singular character is given of the Jews of this place;—they possessed a liberality of mind, which disposed them to listen with attention, and to search the scriptures of the Old Testament with daily assiduity. The grace of God seems to have prepared these persons for the gospel; and Paul had the pleasure to find a number of the stamp of Cornelius, who were groping their way to happiness, and were ready to hail the light as soon as it should dawn upon them. Many Jews of Berea believed, and not a few Gentiles also of both sexes: those of the female sex were persons of quality. The rage of the Thessalonian Jews soon however disturbed this pleasing scene, and stirred up a persecution, which obliged the Christians to use some art in saving the apostle's life. His conductors at first took the road toward the sea, which might lead the persecutors to suppose he had quitted the continent. They then brought him safe to Athens, once the first city of Greece in all views, and still renowned for taste and science, the school in which the greatest Romans studied philosophy. Here, while he waited for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he beheld the monuments of the city with other eyes than those of a scholar and man of taste. No place in the world could more have entertained a curious and philosophical spirit than this. Temples, altars, statues, historical memorials, living philosophers of various sects, books of those *who were deceased*, a confluence of polite

and humanized persons of various countries, enjoying the luxury of learned leisure,—these things must at once have obtruded themselves on his notice: and no man in any age, by strength of understanding, warmth of temper, and justness of taste, seems to have been more capable of entering into the spirit of such scenes than Saul of Tarsus. But divine grace had given his faculties a very different direction; and the Christian in him predominated extremely above the philosopher and the critic. He saw here, that even the excess of learning brought men no nearer to God. No place on earth was more given to idolatry. He could not therefore find pleasure in the classical luxuries presented before him: he saw his Maker disgraced, and souls perishing in sin. Pity and indignation swallowed up all other emotions; and ministers of Christ, by their own sensations in similar scenes, may try how far they are possessed of the mind of Paul, which, in this case, certainly was the mind of Christ. He laid open the reasons of Christianity to Jews in their synagogue, also to Gentile worshippers, who attended the synagogue, and, daily, to any persons whom he met with in the forum. There were two sects very opposite to each other among the Pagan philosophers, namely, the Epicureans and the Stoics. The former placed the chief good in pleasure, the latter, in what they called virtue, correspondent to the two chief sects among the Jews, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and indeed to the two sorts among mankind in all ages, who yet are in a state of nature, namely, men of a licentious and dissipated turn of mind on the one hand, and on the other, self-righteous persons, who substitute their own reason and virtue in the room of divine grace and divine influence. As these will in every age unite against the real friends of Jesus Christ, so it was here: the apostle appeared a mere babbler in their eyes. Jesus and the resurrection, which he preached, were ideas from which

their minds were so abhorrent, that they took them for a new god and goddess.

It belonged to the court of Areopagus to take cognizance of things of this nature. That St. Paul escaped condemnation here, seems owing to peculiar circumstances. The court, under the tolerating maxims of its Roman superior, seems now to have had only the privilege of examining tenets as a synod, without the penal power of magistracy.

It would carry me too far to dwell on the excellent apology of Paul delivered before this court. He reproved their idolatry in language and by arguments perfectly classical; and he announced so much of the gospel, as was adapted to the very ignorant state of his audience. Whoever duly examines this short masterpiece of eloquence, may see that he labours to beget in them the spirit of conviction, and to prepare them for gospel-mercy, just as Peter did in his first sermon at Jerusalem. The means used by the two apostles are as different, as the circumstances of a Jewish and Athenian audience were: the end aimed at by both was the same.

There is reason to apprehend, that God never suffers the plain and faithful denunciation of his gospel to be altogether fruitless. A few persons believed in reality and with steadfastness, among whom was Dionysius, a member of the court, and a woman named Damaris. These Paul left to the care of that gracious God who had opened their eyes, and he departed from a city as yet too haughty, too scornful, and too indifferent concerning things of infinite moment, to receive the gospel. A church could hardly be said to be formed here, though a few individuals were converted. The little success at Athens evinces that a spirit of literary trifling in religion, where all is theory, and the conscience is unconcerned, hardens the heart effectually. What a contrast between the effects of the same gospel dispensed to the illiterate Macedonians, and the phi-

losophical Athenians! Yet there want not many professing Christians, who, while they stigmatize men of the former sort with the name of barbarians, bestow on the latter the appellation of enlightened philosophers.

VII.—CORINTH.

CORINTH was, at this period, the metropolis of Greece. Its situation on an isthmus rendered it remarkably convenient for trade. It was the residence of the Roman governor of Achaia, the name then given to all Greece; and it was, at once, full of opulence, luxury, and sensuality. Hither the apostle came from Athens, and laboured both among the Jews and the Gentiles. Here Providence favoured him with the acquaintance and friendship of Aquila and his wife Priscilla, two Jewish Christians lately expelled from Italy with other Jews, by an edict of the emperor Claudius. With them he wrought as a tent-maker, being of the same occupation: for every Jew, whether rich or poor, was obliged to follow some trade. After the arrival of Silas and Timothy, the apostle with much vehemence preached to his countrymen; but opposition and abuse were the only returns he met with. The modern notions of charity will scarcely be reconciled to the zealous indignation which he showed on this occasion. He shook his garment, and told them, that he was clear of their destruction; and that he would leave them, and apply himself to the Gentiles in the city. With this denunciation he left the synagogue, and entered into the house of one Justus, a devout person, well affected to the gospel. Crispus also, the ruler of the synagogue, with his whole family, received the truth. But we hear of no more Jewish converts at this place. However, many Corinthians were converted. And a gracious vision of the Lord Jesus, who said to Paul in the night, "I have much people in this

city," encouraged him to continue there a year and a half.—The rage of the Jews would doubtless be raised to the highest pitch; but, as usual, the moderate spirit of the Roman government prevented its sanguinary exertions. Gallio the proconsul, brother of the famous Seneca, was perfectly indifferent concerning the progress of Christianity, and refused to pay the least attention to their complaints against Paul, who now found himself so effectually preserved from the fury of his countrymen, that he remained in Corinth a considerable time longer than the above-mentioned year and a half. After his departure, Apollos, a zealous and eloquent Alexandrian Jew, came to this city, and was made a very powerful instrument of building up this church, and of silencing the opposition of the Jews. The modesty of this man was as conspicuous as his spirit. Till he was instructed more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla, he knew no more of Christianity, than was contained in the system of John the Baptist. That so able a man could submit to profit by others, was a proof of a humble frame.

It appears that St. Paul, so far as circumstances admitted, kept up a constant correspondence with the churches. The care of them, as he says, "came upon him daily." The Corinthians wrote to him to ask his advice on some cases of conscience; and he understood that a variety of evils and abuses had crept in among them. On these accounts he wrote the two epistles to the Corinthians. In reviewing them, we are astonished to find how faulty many persons of this church were; and the scene which they exhibit, more resembles modern than primitive times, in a variety of circumstances. It falls not within the design of this history to enlarge. Former writers have, with more than sufficient accuracy, detailed the evils; let one, at least, be allowed briefly to record the good things of the church of Christ. In regard to the people of Corinth, their exemption

from persecution under Gallio, and their state of ease and prosperity, so uncommon with other churches, in a great measure account for the little spirituality which they manifested. Perhaps no church was more numerous, and none less holy in the apostolic age. And it may teach us not to repine at the want of the MIRACULOUS operations of the Holy Spirit, when we consider that these Corinthians abounded in them. But many of them were proud of gifts, contentious, self-conceited, and warm partisans of Paul, Apollos, or Peter; and by the indulgence of this sectarian spirit, they showed how little they had learned of true wisdom, which gives the apostle occasion to recommend the wisdom that is from above, to point out the nature and properties of spiritual understanding, and to pour a just contempt on that which is merely natural.

With the pride of false wisdom they joined a very blameable neglect in practice. St. Paul rebukes them also for their litigiousness and lasciviousness. In answer to their queries, he recommends celibacy as preferable to matrimony where a man can practise it, and that, I think, from general reasons, as more favourable to holiness, without, however, depreciating matrimony, or giving the least countenance to the flood of monastic abuses which afterwards prevailed in Christendom.

So little were the Corinthians exposed to persecution, that they were invited by their idolatrous neighbours to partake of their idol feasts; and there were among them those who complied. There were also among them false apostles, who, by pretending to instruct them gratis, endeavoured to depreciate Paul as a mercenary person. Hence, while he rebukes the faults or defects of this people, he observes that HE laboured among them freely, which the false apostles pretended to do. He proceeds to correct an abuse which obtained in their assemblies, in the article of decency of dress; and another much

worse,—the profanation of the Lord's Supper. He insists also on the correction of their abuse of spiritual gifts, particularly those of languages. It appears that gifts were more prized by them, in some respects, than grace itself; and that love, which he beautifully describes, was at a low ebb among them. He occasionally mentions, however, a very common effect attendant on the preaching of the gospel even at Corinth. If an ignorant idolator came into their assemblies, he was so penetrated with the display of the truth as it is in Jesus, that he could not but discover the very secrets of his soul: he would prostrate himself in the worship of God, and report that God was in them of a truth. And if, where the gospel was so little honoured by the lives of its professors as at Corinth, such power attended the dispensation of it, how much more of the same kind, may we suppose, happened at Philippi and at Thessalonica! For we have not yet mentioned all the evils of this outwardly flourishing, but inwardly distempered church. There were some, who even denied the resurrection of the body, which gives occasion to the apostle to illustrate that important article.

Though he had promised to revisit them soon, yet in the next epistle, he assigns a reason why he delayed longer than he had intended. Their Christian state was very imperfect; and he wished to be enabled, by their reformation, to come among them with more pleasure. In truth he wrote the first epistle in much anguish and affliction. His soul was deeply affected for this people; and while great progress in profession seemed so inconsistent with their experience and their practice, he felt the sincerest grief. He was relieved at length by the coming of Titus, from whose account it appeared, that his admonitions were by no means fruitless.

There can be no doubt but that many persons belonging to this church were recovered to a state

of affection and practice worthy of Christianity. In particular the apostle commends their liberality towards the distressed Christians. But there was still an obstinate party among the Corinthians, attached to the false apostles, whose conduct extorted from him a zealous and honest vindication of himself, his endowments, and his office, which yet he manages with great address and delicacy, while he bewails the scandalous practices still existing among them.

On his arrival at Corinth after these epistles, he doubtless executed what he had threatened, namely, some wholesome severities on offenders, unless their speedy and sincere repentance prevented the necessity of such a step. He spent three months in his second visit. But we have no more particular account in scripture of this church.

VIII.—ROME.

It may seem to have been purposely appointed by infinite wisdom, that our first accounts of the Roman church should be very imperfect, in order to confute the proud pretensions to universal dominion, which its bishops have with unblushing arrogance supported for so many ages. If a line or two in the gospels concerning the keys of St. Peter have been made the foundation of such lofty pretensions in his supposed successors to the primacy, how would they have gloried, if his labours at Rome had been so distinctly celebrated, as those of St. Paul in several churches have been? What bounds would have been set to the pride of ecclesiastical Rome, could she have boasted of herself as the mother-church, like Jerusalem, or even exhibited such trophies of scriptural fame, as Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, or Ephesus? The silence of scripture is the more remarkable, because the church itself was in an early period by no means insignificant, either for

the number or the piety of its converts. Their faith was spoken of through the whole world. The apostle thus commends them; nor does he in his epistle to them intimate any thing peculiarly faulty in their principles or conduct. The epistle to the Romans itself, while the world endures, will be the food of Christian minds, and the richest system of doctrine to scriptural theologians. By the distinct directions which he gives for the maintenance of charity between Jews and Gentiles, it appears that there must have been a considerable number of the former among them. If one might indulge a conjecture, I should suppose that Aquila and Priscilla, who had laboured with St. Paul at Corinth both in a spiritual and temporal sense, and had been expelled from Italy by the emperor Claudius, and whom he here salutes as at Rome, were first concerned in the plantation of this church, which was numerous, before any apostle had been there. Andronicus and Junius are saluted also in the epistle: they were men of character among the apostles, whose conversion was of an earlier date than St. Paul's: they were also his kinsmen, and had suffered in conjunction with him for the faith. He salutes also a number of others, though they might not all be residents of Rome. The work of divine grace in distinguishing persons of various families and connections is ever observable. There were saints at Rome of the two families of Aristobulus and Narcissus. The former was of the royal blood of the Maccabees, and had been carried prisoner to Rome by Pompey. He himself had suffered a variety of hardships incident to a life of turbulent ambition like his; yet some of his family, of no note in civil history, are marked as the disciples of Christ, and heirs of the true riches. Narcissus is distinguished in Roman history, as the ambitious prime minister of Claudius; yet some of his household were in the Lord.

Paul had long wished and even projected a visit

to this church. He did not expect that his journey thither at last was to be at Cæsar's expense. Confident, however, he was, that when he did come to them, it should be "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." And he intreats the prayers of the Romans, that he may be delivered from the infidel Jews, and be acceptable in his ministry to his believing countrymen at Jerusalem, whither he was then hastening, that "he might come to them with joy by the will of God," and be with them refreshed. Thus did Christians in those days intreat the prayers of their brethren through the world, and sympathize with one another. And these prayers were answered: Paul was saved from Jewish malice: was acceptable to the Jewish converts, "who had compassion on him in his bonds;" and was conducted safe to Rome. At Appii Forum and the three taverns he was met by the Roman Christians: he thanked God and took courage, refreshed, as he had been confident he should be, whenever he might arrive among them. None but those who know what is meant by the communion of saints, can conceive the pleasure which he felt on the occasion. After a charitable but fruitless attempt to do good to the principal Jews at Rome, he employed the two years of his imprisonment in receiving all who came to him, preaching with all confidence, and without molestation. On account of his imprisonment and examination at Rome, the nature of the gospel began to be inquired into in Nero's court, and the conclusion of the epistle to the Philippians makes it evident, that some of the imperial household became Christians indeed. And as the court was by no means disposed to treat him with rigour, but rather to favour him with indulgences as a Roman citizen, hence many preachers in Rome and the neighbourhood exerted themselves with more courage than formerly they dared to do.

IX.—COLOSSE.

THIS City of Phrygia was in the neighbourhood of Laodicea and Hierapolis, and all three seem to have been converted by the ministry of Epaphras the Colossian, a companion and fellow-labourer of Paul, who attended him at Rome during his imprisonment, and informed him of the sincerity and fruitfulness of their Christian profession. For though he speaks to the Colossians only, yet the religious state of the two neighbouring cities may be conceived to be much the same. The example of Epaphras deserves to be pointed out to the imitation of all ministers. He always laboured fervently for them in prayers, “that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” And this was indeed one of the best methods of evincing the sincerity of his zeal, which Paul owns to have been great for these churches.

The apostle himself, in the fulness and fervency of his charity, wishes, that the Colossians knew how strong the conflict of his soul was for them, that they might feel the comfort, understand the mystery, and enjoy the riches of the gospel. They had never seen his face in the flesh; but he felt for them as Christian brethren, and honoured them as those, in whom the word brought forth fruit, and who had a lively hope in Christ beyond the grave. But there must have been some particular dangers incident to their situation, to give propriety to the cautions in his epistle against philosophy and vain deceit, against Judaical dependences and rites, and against an illegitimate humility and self-righteous austerities. Such things, he observes, carry indeed the appearance of wisdom and goodness, but lead only to pride and an extravagant self-estimation. And the tendency of them is, to draw the mind from that simplicity of dependence on Christ, which is the true rest of the soul, and the right frame of a Christian.

In truth, the Jew by his ceremonies, and the Gentile by his philosophy, equally laboured to overturn the gospel of Christ. And their self-righteous efforts are then only effectually opposed, when Christians know their "completeness in Christ, and walk in him." After delivering a number of beautiful precepts closely interwoven with Christian doctrine, the apostle directs them to read his epistle in their assembly, and then to send it to be read by the Laodiceans; and also to receive an epistle from Laodicea to be read in their own church, which most probably, was the epistle to the Ephesians, none of these places being at a great distance from one another. And he gives a plain, but very serious charge to Archippus their present pastor. We see hence, with what care these precious apostolical remains were preserved among primitive Christians, and we may conceive, how, in the infancy of spiritual consolation, they fed on those lively oracles, which we now so indolently possess.

X.—THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

THERE are some countries, to which we understand that the gospel was carried during the first effusion of the Holy Spirit, which are only incidentally mentioned, without any detail of facts.

Extensive as we have seen, from St. Luke's narrative, the labours of the Apostle Paul were, it is evident from the epistles, that he is far from relating the whole of them. We cannot learn, for instance, from the Acts, when he visited Crete. Yet the short epistle to Titus, whom he left there with episcopal authority to ordain ministers in every city, and to regulate the churches, shows that that island of a hundred cities had been considerably evangelized, and that many persons, among a people proverbially deceitful, ferocious, and intemperate, had received the wholesome yoke of Christ. And though I cannot

but think, that the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, to whom St. Peter addresses his two epistles, must mean the Jews of those countries, yet their conversion would doubtless be attended with that of many Gentiles. Of three of these we know nothing particularly : the work of God in Galatia has been reviewed ; and Asia propria alone, of all the evangelized regions mentioned in scripture history, so far as I can discover, remains now to be considered.

It was on his first departure from Corinth, that Paul first visited Ephesus, which name stands at the head of the seven churches of Asia, to whom St. John dedicates the book of the Revelation. The impression made on his hearers during this visit, must have been remarkably great, as it was but a short one, and as they pressed his longer continuance among them. He left with them, however, for their comfort and instruction, Aquila and Priscilla, whose labours were afterwards assisted by Apollos.

Paul himself, returning to Ephesus, baptized in the name of Jesus about twelve disciples, who had hitherto received only John's baptism. From this circumstance we learn, that from the first preaching of the Baptist nothing had been done in vain. The imperfect elements of that harbinger of Christ had paved the way for clearer discoveries, and a variety of preparatory works had tended to ripen the church of God into the fulness of light and holiness.

Paul preached three months in the Jewish synagogue at Ephesus, till the usual perverseness of the Jews induced him to desist, and to form the converts into a distinct church. One Tyrannus lent his school for the service of Christianity ; and in that convenient place, for the space of two years, the apostle daily ministered, instructed, and disputed. And thus the whole region of Asia propria had at different times an opportunity of hearing the gospel.

In no place does the word of God seem so much to

have triumphed as at Ephesus. No less numerous than those of Corinth, the believers were much more spiritual. The work of conversion was deep, vigorous, and soul-transforming to a great degree. Many persons, struck with the horror of their former crimes, made an open confession; and many, who had dealt in the abominations of sorcery, now showed their sincere detestation of them by burning their books before all men, the price of which amounted to a large sum. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."—Thus triumphs the sacred historian.—Satan must have trembled for his kingdom: the emptiness of all the systems of philosophy appeared no less palpable, than the flagitiousness of vice, and the enormities of idolatry: The spiritual power of Jesus was never seen in a stronger light since the day of Pentecost; and the vernal priesthood of Diana, the celebrated goddess of Ephesus, apprehended the total ruin of their hierarchy. They soon prevailed so far as to fill the city with tumult; and they hurried two of Paul's companions with them into the theatre, where the whole mob assembled. The daring spirit of Paul would have led him into the same place. His Christian friends interposed, and even some of the Asiarchs, officers who presided over the games,—who had a personal esteem for him, kindly dissuaded him. His zeal seems not void of rashness, but it was the rashness of a hero vexed to the soul to think that Gaius and Aristarchus, his two friends, were likely to suffer in his absence. Now, I apprehend, was that season of extreme distress, which he felt in Asia, and which he describes so pathetically in his epistle to the Corinthians. Human resources failed; and God alone, he learnt, could support him. The prudent and eloquent harangue of a magistrate, called the town-clerk, was the providential instrument of his deliverance. He calmed the spirit of the Ephesians, and silenced the uproar; after which

Paul affectionately embraced the disciples, and left Ephesus. Three years he had laboured with great success ; and he had the precaution to leave pastors to superintend that and the neighbouring churches. But he foresaw with grief, as he afterwards told these pastors in a very pathetic address, when he had sent for them to Miletus, that their present purity would not continue unstained. Wolves would enter among them to devour the flock ; and, among themselves heretical perverseness would find countenance, and produce pernicious separations. He did all, however, which man could do : he warned them of the danger ; and exhorted them to the persevering discharge of their duty.

The parting between the apostles and these ministers cannot be read without emotion. The elegant and affecting narrative of St. Luke is before the reader, and ought not to be abridged. The corruption of this excellent church seems not, however, to have taken place, when he wrote to them his epistle. It is full of instruction ; and, next to that to the Romans, may be looked on as a most admirable system of divinity. It has this remarkable recommendation, that it will serve for any church, and for any age. Not a vestige appears in it of any thing peculiarly miraculous, or exclusively primitive. The controversies of the Christian world concerning doctrine would soon be decided, if men would submit to be taught by the simple, literal, and grammatical meaning of this short treatise. Every thing of doctrine, and of duty, is in it ; and what the gospel really is, may hence be collected with the greatest certainty.

We know nothing more of this church during the remainder of St. Paul's life, nor after his death, till towards the close of the first century. St. John, the only survivor of the apostles, long continued his fatherly care of the churches of Asia propria. During his exile at Patmos he was favoured with an astonishing and magnificent vision of the Lord Jesus,

from whom he received several distinct charges addressed to the seven churches of Asia, descriptive of their spiritual state at that time, and containing suitable directions to each of them. The pastors of the churches are called angels; and what has been observable in all ages was then the case,—the character of the pastors was much the same with that of the people. We have here, then, from the highest authority, some account of the state of these churches at the close of the first century: it is short, but important. Let us endeavour to comprise it into as clear a view as possible.

The Ephesians were still alive in the faith. Attempts had been made to pervert them, but in vain. However subtile the poison of heresy may be, here it could find no admission. Nor could the abominations of the Nicolaitanes, who appear to have been a sect extremely corrupt in morals, make any progress among them. They patiently bore the cross, ever attendant on the real faith of Jesus, but could endure nothing that tended to adulterate it. The taste and spirit of the gospel continued with them. They laboured in good works without fainting or weariness; and their spiritual discernment was not to be imposed on by any pretences. Yet they had declined from the intenseness of that love which they had first exhibited. Their hearts panted not after Christ with that steady ardour which formerly had animated this people; and, with all the marks of sound health remaining, their vigour had much abated.

How exactly does this account agree with the common case of the best Christian churches. Because it is a common case, and far from being the worst case, Christians are apt to be content under such a decline, and to impute it to necessity, or to the loss of sudden fervours of no great value, and to plant themselves on the solidity of an improved judgment. But true zeal and true charity should be shown habitually, and not only now and then when occasional

inroads of the enemy may happen to call for particular exertions. These affections ought to grow as the understanding is improved. The spirit of prayer, of love to Christ, of active services for his name, was now abated at Ephesus, and a cool prudence was too much magnified at the expense of charity. The eternal salvation of real Christians there was safe: but real Christians should have more in view than their own salvation; namely, the propagation of godliness to posterity. These cautious Christians did not consider that their decline paved the way for farther and more melancholy declensions in the divine life: that the influence of their example was likely to be mischievous to those who followed: that their juniors would much more readily imitate their defects than their virtues; in fine, that a foundation was already laid for the unchurching of this people, and for the desolation in which this very region now remains, under Mahometan wickedness and ignorance.

The church of Smyrna was next addressed. They were at once in a state of great purity of doctrine, and holiness of heart and life. The Divine Saviour commends them in general. That toward the end of the first century they should have preserved the divine life in such vigour, a period of about forty years, most probably, if indeed there had been no intermissions,—is somewhat extraordinary, and except in the case of Philadelphia, not easily paralleled in history. So naturally does depravity prevail, in a course of time, over the best constituted churches. But their tribulation and poverty are particularly marked. They were rich in heavenly grace, poor in worldly circumstances. If poor churches were fully sensible of the mischiefs which often arise from the accession of opulent individuals, they would not plume themselves so much on the admission of such members as they often do. The Smyranean Christians were chiefly of the poorer sort of inhabitants; yet were they infested with pretenders, of the same

spirit as those who attempted to adulterate the gospel at Ephesus. Of the Smyrneans it may be sufficient to say, that they made large pretensions to pure religion, that their corruptions were judaical, and that they were under the influence of Satan. This church is taught to expect a severe persecution which was to last some time, and they are exhorted to persevere in faith.

The church of Pergamus was also approved of in general. They lived in the midst of a very impious people, who, in effect, worshipped Satan himself, and did all that in them lay to support his kingdom. Yet was their zeal firm and steady. Nor was its object a few trilling punctilios, or some little niceties of a doubtful disputation, but the precious name of Christ himself and the faith of his gospel. Hence they were exposed not only to contempt, but to danger of life itself, and to cruel sufferings. Our Lord mentions one person with particular complacency, "my faithful martyr Antipas." We know no more of him than what is here recorded, that "he was slain among them, where Satan dwelt." But what an honour to be thus distinguished! Volumes of panegyric have been composed for mere statesmen, heroes, and scholars. How frigid do they all appear, taken together, compared with this simple testimony of Jesus! But this church does not escape censure entirely. There were among them certain wicked and dangerous characters, who, acting like Balaam of old, were employed by Satan to entice persons to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication; two evils often closely connected: and even the abominations of the Nicolaitanes were practised by some. All these are exhorted to repent, from the fear of divine vengeance. On the whole, with a few exceptions, and those indeed of an extraordinary degree of malignity, the church of Pergamus was pure and lively, and upheld the standard of truth, though encircled with the flames of martyrdom.

The church at Thyatira was in a thriving state.

Charity, active services, patient dependence on God, and a steady reliance on the divine promises, marked their works: and, what is peculiarly laudable, their last works were more excellent than their first. A sounder proof of genuine religion than such a gradual improvement can scarcely be conceived. Yet it is imputed as a fault to this church, that they suffered an artful woman to seduce the people into the same evils which had infected Pergamus. Her real name we know not: her allegorical name is Jezebel: she resembled the wife of Ahab, who kept four hundred prophets at her table, and exerted all her influence to promote idolatry. The people of God should have counteracted her, but they did not; an advantage which deceitful guides have often gained through the negligence of the sincere. The very sex of the pretended prophetess was a sufficient reason why she should have been restrained. "Let your women keep silence in the churches," is an express prohibition of females from the office of teaching, however useful in other respects pious women may be in the church. Our Lord informs the church in Thyatira, that he gave her space to repent, but to no purpose, and therefore he now denounces severe threatenings against her and her associates, at the same time vindicating his claim to divine worship by the incommunicable title of him who searches the hearts, and declaring that he would make himself known to be such in all the churches. To those who had kept themselves unspotted from these evils, he declares "he would put no other burden on them:" only he exhorts them to hold fast what they already had to the day of judgment. The unsound Christians in this place pretended to great depths of knowledge, which were, in reality, depths of Satan.—Such persons often impose on others, and are imposed on themselves, by pretences to profound knowledge and to superior degrees of sanctity.

The church of Sardis presents us with an unpleasing spectacle. Their great inferiority to Thyatira evinces, how possible it is for two societies of Christians, holding the same doctrines, to be in a very different state. He "who walks in the midst of the churches," extols the growing faith and charity of the first, and condemns the drooping condition of the second. They had neglected that course of prayer and watchfulness, which is necessary to preserve the divine life in vigour. Their works were now faintly distinguishable from those of persons altogether dead in sin. Some good things remained in them, which yet were ready to die: but their lives brought no glory to God, nor benefit to the cause of Christ; and could scarcely prevent its being scandalized in the world. A few names indeed there were in Sardis, whom Jesus looked on with complacency: they had not defiled their garments. But most of the Christians there had contracted deep stains, probably by freely mixing with the world, and by conforming to its customs. And we see here an awful fact authenticated in the highest possible manner,—that among a society of persons all professing the gospel, the greater part may be very dead in their souls. It should ever be remembered, that human nature is averse to real faith, heavenly hope, and genuine charity. An omnipotent energy alone can produce or preserve true holiness.

The Christians of Philadelphia are highly extolled. They were a humble, charitable, fervent people, deeply sensible of their own weakness, and fearful of being seduced by Satan and their own hearts. The Spirit assures them, that they had a little strength, which had at once been proved and exerted in holding fast the simplicity of the gospel, and in detecting and resisting all adulterations of it. They are further assured, that the Judaical heretics should be brought at length to submit to become their disciples in religion: and a promise of strong

support is held out to them, because they had maintained a true patience in suffering. To them, as to all the rest of the churches, the rewards beyond the grave are proposed as the grand motives of perseverance.

Laodicea too much resembled Sardis. The people were in a lukewarm state, a religious mediocrity, most odious to Christ; because his religion calls for the whole vehemence of the soul, and bids us to be cool only in worldly things. The foundation of this lukewarmness was laid in pride: they had lost the conviction of their internal blindness, misery, and depravity. When men go on for years in a placid unfeeling uniformity, this is always the case. They were satisfied with themselves, and felt no need of higher attainments. The counsel which is given to them,—to buy of him gold, white raiment, and eye-salve,—is precious; and this call to their souls demonstrates that they had learnt to maintain, in easy indolence, an orthodoxy of sentiments without any vivid attention to the Spirit of God:—In a word, his influence was only not despised in Laodicea.

Such were the situations of the seven churches of Asia. The criticism is indeed inestimable: it is candid, impartial, and penetrating. He, who has indulged us with it, intended it for the use of all succeeding churches:—and “he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”

XI.—THE REMAINDER OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

It seems plain that the apostles in general did not leave Judea, till after the first council held at Jerusalem. They seem never to have been in haste to quit the land of their nativity. Probably the threatening appearances of its desolation by the Romans, hastened their departure into distant regions. It is

certain that before the close of this century, the power of the gospel was felt throughout the Roman empire.

I shall divide this chapter into four parts, and review first,—The progress and persecution of the church, Secondly,—The lives, characters, and deaths of the apostles and most celebrated evangelists. Thirdly,—The heresies of this period. And, lastly,—The general character of Christianity in this first age.

It was about the year of our Lord 64, that the city of Rome sustained a general conflagration. The emperor Nero, lost as he was to all sense of reputation, and hacknied in flagitiousness, was yet studious to avert the infamy of being reckoned the author of this calamity, which was generally imputed to him. But no steps that he could take were sufficient to do away the suspicion. There was, however, a particular class of people, so singularly distinct from the rest of mankind, and so much hated on account of the condemnation which their doctrine and purity of life affixed to all except themselves, that they might be calumniated with impunity. These were then known at Rome by the name of Christians. Unless we transplant ourselves into those times, we can scarcely conceive how odious and contemptible the appellation then was. The judicious Tacitus calls their religion a detestable superstition, 'which at first was suppressed, and afterwards broke out afresh, and spread not only through Judea, the origin of the evil, but through the metropolis also, the common sewer in which every thing filthy and flagitious meets and spreads.' If so grave and cautious a writer as Tacitus can thus asperse the Christians without proof, and without moderation, we need not wonder that so impure a wretch as Nero should not hesitate to charge them with the fact of burning Rome.

Now it was that the Romans legally persecuted the church for the first time. And those, who know

the virulence of man's natural enmity, will rather wonder that it commenced not earlier, than that it raged at length with such dreadful fury. 'Some persons were apprehended, who confessed themselves Christians; and by their evidence,' says Tacitus, 'a great multitude afterwards were discovered and seized:—and they were condemned not so much for the burning of Rome, as for being the enemies of mankind.' A very remarkable accusation! It may be explained as follows:—True Christians, though the genuine friends of all their fellow-creatures, cannot allow men, who are NOT true Christians, to be in the favour of God. Their very earnestness, in calling on their neighbours to repent and believe the gospel, proves to those neighbours in what a dangerous state they are then apprehended to be. All, who are not moved by the admonitions of Christian charity to flee from the wrath to come, will naturally be disgusted; and thus the purest benevolence will be construed into the most merciless bigotry. Thus Christians incurred the general hatred, to which the conduct neither of Jews nor heretics rendered them obnoxious.—And the same cause produces similar effects to this day.

Their execution was aggravated with insult. They were covered with skins of wild beasts and torn by dogs: they were crucified, and set on fire, that they might serve for lights in the night-time. Nero offered his gardens for this spectacle, and exhibited the games of the circus. People could not, however, avoid pitying them, base, and undeserving as they were in the eyes of Tacitus, because they suffered not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of a tyrant. It appears from a passage in Seneca, compared with Juvenal, that Nero ordered them to be covered with wax, and other combustible materials: and that, after a sharp stake was put under their chin, to make them continue upright, they were burnt alive to give light to the spectators.

We have no account how the people of God conducted themselves under these sufferings. What we know of their behaviour in similar scenes, leaves us in no doubt of their having been supported by the power of the Holy Ghost. Nor is it credible, that the persecution should have been confined to Rome. It would naturally spread through the empire; and one of Cyriac's inscriptions found in Spain, demonstrates at once two important facts, —that the gospel had already penetrated into that country, and that the church there had also her martyrs.

Three or four years were probably the utmost extent of this tremendous persecution, as in the year 68 the tyrant was himself, by a dreadful exit, summoned before the divine tribunal. He left the Roman world in a state of extreme confusion. Judea partook of it in a remarkable degree. About forty years after our Lord's sufferings, wrath came on the body of the Jewish nation to the uttermost, in a manner too well known to need the least relation in this history. What became of the Christian Jews alone concerns us. The congregation were commanded, by an oracle revealed to the best approved among them, that before the wars began, they should depart from the city, and inhabit a village beyond Jordan, called Pella. Thither they retired, and were saved from the destruction which soon after overwhelmed their countrymen: and in so retiring they at once observed the precept, and fulfilled the well-known prophecy of their Saviour. The death of Nero, and the destruction of Jerusalem, would naturally occasion some respite to them from their sufferings; and we hear no more of their persecuted state, till the reign of Domitian, the last of the Flavian family, who succeeded to the empire in the year 81.

He does not appear to have raged against the Christians, till the latter end of his reign. Indeed, in imitation of his father Vespasian, he made re-

quiry for such of the Jews as were descended from the royal line of David. His motives were evidently political. But there wanted not those who were glad of any opportunity of wreaking their malice on Christians. Some persons, who were brought before the emperor, were charged with being related to the royal family. They appear to have been related to our Lord, and were grandsons of Jude the apostle, his cousin. Domitian asked them, if they were of the family of David, which they acknowledged. He then demanded, what possessions they enjoyed, and what money they had. They laid open the poverty of their circumstances, and owned that they maintained themselves by their labour. The truth of their confession was evinced by their hands, and by their appearance in general. Domitian then interrogated them concerning Christ and his kingdom,—when and where it should appear? They answered, like their master when questioned by Pilate,—that his kingdom was not of this world, but heavenly: that its glory should appear at the consummation of the world, when he should judge the quick and dead, and reward every man according to his works. Poverty is sometimes a defence against oppression, though it never shields from contempt. Domitian was satisfied that his throne was in no danger from Christian ambition; and the grandsons of Jude were dismissed with the same sort of derision with which their Saviour had formerly been dismissed by Herod. Thus had the Son of God provided for his indigent relations:—they were poor in circumstances, but rich in faith, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom.

As Domitian increased in cruelty, toward the end of his reign he renewed the horrors of Nero's persecution. He put to death many persons accused of atheism, the common charge against Christians, on account of their refusal to worship the pagan gods. Among these was the consul Flavius Clemens &

cousin, who had espoused Flavia Domitilla his relation.

In the year ninety-six Domitian was slain; and Nerva, the succeeding emperor, published a pardon for those who were condemned for impiety, recalled those who were banished, and forbade the accusing of any men on account of impiety or Judaism. Others who were under accusation or under sentence of condemnation, now escaped by the lenity of Nerva. This brings us to the close of the century, in which we behold the Christians, for the present, in a state of external peace. Only one person enjoyed not the benefit of Nerva's mildness. Domitilla still continued in exile, probably because she was a relation of the late tyrant, whose name was now odious through the world. Doubtless she was not forsaken of her God and Saviour.

The first of the twelve apostles who suffered martyrdom, we have seen, was James the son of Zebedee. He fell a sacrifice to Herod Agrippa's ambitious desire of popularity. I recal him to the reader's memory, on account of a remarkable circumstance attending his death. The man who had drawn him before the tribunal, when he saw the readiness with which he submitted to martyrdom, was struck with remorse; and by one of those sudden conversions not unfrequent amidst the remarkable effusions of the Spirit, was himself turned from the power of Satan to God. He confessed Christ with great cheerfulness. James and this man were both led to execution; and in the way thither the accuser requested the apostle's forgiveness, which he obtained. James turning to him answered, "Peace be to thee;" and kissed him; and they were beheaded together. The efficacy of Divine Grace, and the blessed fruit of holy example, are both illustrated in this story, of which it were to be wished we knew more than the very scanty account which has been recorded.

The other James was preserved in Judea to a

much later period. His martyrdom took place about the year sixty-two; and his epistle was published a little before his death. As he always resided at Jerusalem, and was providentially preserved through various persecutions, he had an opportunity of overcoming enmity itself, and abating prejudice in some measure. The name of Just was generally given him on account of his singular innocence and integrity. And as he conformed to Jewish customs with more than occasional regularity, he was by no means so odious in the eyes of his unbelieving countrymen, as the apostle of the Gentiles. But we are to observe, that if he had fully overcome their enmity, he could not have been faithful to his Lord and Master. Many Jews respected the man, and admired the fruits of the gospel in him. The root and principle of these fruits was still their abhorrence; and from the relation of Eusebius, the testimony of Hegesippus, an early Christian historian whom he quotes, and of Josephus, it is plain that it was thought a pitiable thing that so good a man should be a Christian. Paul's escape from Jewish malice, by appealing to Cæsar, had sharpened the spirits of this people; and they were determined to wreck their vengeance on James, who was merely a Jew, and could plead no Roman exemptions. Festus died president of Judæa; and before his successor Albinus arrived, Ananias the high priest, a Sadducee and a merciless persecutor, held the supreme power in the interim. He called a council, before which he summoned James with some others, and accused them of breaking the law of Moses. But it was not easy to procure his condemnation. His holy life had long secured the veneration of his countrymen.

The leading men were uneasy on account of the vast increase of Christian converts, added to the church by his labours, example, and authority: and they endeavoured to entangle him, by persuading him to mount a pinnacle of the temple, and to speak to the

people assembled at the time of the passover against Christianity. James being placed aloft, delivered a frank confession of Jesus; and declared that he was then sitting at the right hand of power, and that he would come in the clouds of heaven. Upon this Ananias and the rulers were highly incensed. To disgrace his character was their first intention—they failed. To murder his person was their next attempt; and this was of much more easy execution. Crying out, that Justus himself was seduced, they threw the apostle down and stoned him. He had strength to fall on his knees and to pray, "I beseech thee, Lord God and Father, for them: for they know not what they do." One of the priests, moved with the scene, cried out, "Cease, what do you mean? This just man is praying for you." A person present with a fuller's club beat out his brains, and completed his martyrdom.

Very remarkable is the acknowledgment of Josephus. "These things," meaning the miseries of the Jews from the Romans, "happened to them by way of revenging the death of James the Just, the brother of Jesus whom they call Christ. For the Jews slew him, though a very just man." And from the same writer we learn, that Albinus severely reprimanded Ananias, and soon after deprived him of the high priesthood.

After the death of James and the desolation of Jerusalem, the apostles and disciples of our Lord, of whom many were yet alive, gathered themselves together with our Lord's kinsmen, to appoint a pastor of the church of Jerusalem in the room of James. The election fell on Simeon, the son of that Cleopas mentioned by St. Luke as one of the two who went to Emmaus, and who was the brother of Joseph, our Lord's reputed father. We shall leave Simeon, at the end of this century, the chief pastor of the Jewish church.

Paul the apostle seems to have laboured with

unwearied activity from about the year thirty-six to the year sixty-three, that is, from his conversion to the period in which St. Luke finishes his history. Within this period he wrote fourteen epistles, which will be the blessed means of feeding the souls of the faithful to the end of time. The second epistle to Timothy has been commonly supposed to have been written just before his martyrdom; but it was more probably written during his two years' imprisonment at Rome, while he was under no particular apprehension of suffering immediately. From this epistle it is evident that he had already been called before Nero, agreeably to the prediction, "thou must be brought before Cæsar;" and that no Christian, not even any of those who had welcomed his arrival in Italy, durst appear in support of him. He feelingly complains, "all men forsook me." Yet he knew how to distinguish between malevolence and timidity; and, therefore, though he could not excuse their neglect of him, he prays God that it might not be laid to their charge. The terror of Nero seems to have overawed the Roman Christians, many of whom might have borne witness in his favour. Even Demas forsook him, from the love of the world, and departed to Thessalonica. There are seasons of critical danger, which try the hearts of the truest Christians. It was yet a new thing for a Christian to be brought before an emperor: and they had not prepared themselves by watching and prayer for the uncommon occasion. But the grace of the Lord Jesus, which had hitherto been so eminently with the apostle, forsook him not in his trying moments. The Lord "stood with him and strengthened him." He was enabled to testify for Christ and his gospel before Nero, with the same frankness, fortitude, and eloquence, that he had formerly done before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa; and for the first time, and probably the last, the murderous tyrant Nero heard the glad tidings of salvation. It seems by the expression, "that all the Gentiles

might hear," that Paul was heard in a very full and solemn assembly, and had an opportunity of giving a clear account of Christianity. And as some of Cæsar's household are mentioned as saints in the epistle to the Philippians, there is reason to apprehend, that the preaching was not in vain. He was as he owns, "delivered from the mouth of the lion." Nero had not then begun to persecute; and at least he would see the justness of his plea as a Roman citizen, and be disposed to favour it. Nor ought the adorable providence of God to be passed in silence, who gave this man of abandoned wickedness an opportunity of hearing the word of salvation, though it made no useful impression on his mind. Paul seems to have had this audience during the former part of his imprisonment at Rome, and to have been remanded to his confinement for the present.

Here he wrote the epistle to the Philippians and Colossians before the end of the year sixty-two. From the former of these it appears, that the whole court of Nero was made acquainted with his case, and that the cause of the gospel was promoted by these means. In the epistle to Philemon, which accompanied that to the Colossians, he expresses a confidence of being soon set at liberty, and promises in that case shortly to pay them a visit. And as he mentions Demas with respect as his fellow-labourer, both in this epistle to the Colossians, and in that to Philemon, I apprehend Demas had repented of his pusillanimity, and was returned to the apostle and to his duty. This is the second case in which it pleased God to make use of this extraordinary man, St. Paul, for the preservation of the church. The former instance respected the doctrine of justification, from which even apostles were indirectly declining. The latter consisted in the exhibition of a godly spirit of zeal, and an open confession of Christ.

Having obtained his liberty in the year 63, he most probably would soon fulfil his promise to visit

the Hebrews ; after which he might see his Colossian friends. There is no certain account of his coming either to Jerusalem or to Colosse ; but most probably he executed what he had a little before promised. That he ever visited Spain, or our island, is, to say the least, extremely doubtful. Of the last there is a very unfounded report, and of the former no other proof, than the mention of his intention in the epistle to the Romans, which had been written in the year 58, since which time all his measures had been disconcerted. And if he once more made an Asiatic tour, after his departure from Rome, there seems not time enough for his accomplishing the western journey, as he suffered martyrdom on his return to Rome, about the year 65.¹ He could have had no great pleasure in visiting Jerusalem : every thing was there hastening to ruin. No man was ever possessed of a more genuine patriotic spirit than this apostle. The Jewish war, which commenced in 66, would have much afflicted him, had he lived to see it. But returning to Rome about a year before, he fell in with the very time when Rome was burnt, and Christians were accused as incendiaries. He now found no mercy from Nero, who would naturally be displeased at the effect which he had observed the preaching of the apostle to produce in his own household. A cupbearer and a concubine of the emperor had been, through Paul's means, converted to the faith, as Chrysostom assures us : and this hastened his death. He was slain with the sword by Nero's order.¹

He had many fellow-labourers, whose names he has immortalized in his writings. He calls Titus his own son after the common faith. Timothy was also a particular favourite. Antiquity regards the former as the first bishop of Crete, and the latter as the first bishop of Ephesus. Luke of Antioch, the writer

¹ Some very respectable chronologers place the martyrdom of St. Paul, A. D. 67.

of the third gospel, and the faithful relater, in the Acts of the Apostles, of this Apostle's transactions, of which he was an eye-witness, is, by him, affectionately denominated 'the beloved physician.' He seems to have retired into Greece after St. Paul's first dismissal by the emperor, and there to have written both his inestimable treatises about the year 63 or 64.

Crescens, whom Paul sent to Galatia, was another of his fellow-labourers. Linus, the first bishop of Rome, may be added to the list, and Dionysius the Areopagite of Athens, whom Eusebius reckons the first bishop of the church in that city.

We have now finished the lives of two men, of singular excellence unquestionably, James the Just and Paul of Tarsus. The former, by his uncommon virtues, attracted the esteem of a whole people, who were full of the strongest prejudices against him: and with regard to the latter, the question may be asked with great propriety, whether such another man ever existed, among all those who have inherited the corrupted nature of Adam? He had evidently a soul large and capacious, and possessed of those seemingly contradictory excellences which, wherever they appear in combination, fail not to form an extraordinary character. But not only were his talents great and various—his learning also was profound and extensive; and many persons with far inferior abilities and attainments have effected national revolutions, or otherwise distinguished themselves in the history of mankind. His consummate fortitude was tempered with the rarest gentleness, and the most active charity. His very copious and vivid imagination was chastised by the most accurate judgment, and was connected with the closest argumentative powers. Divine grace alone could effect so wonderful a combination; insomuch that for the space of near thirty years after his conversion, this man, whose natural haughtiness and

fiery temper had hurried him into a very sanguinary course of persecution, lived the friend of mankind; returned good for evil continually; was a model of patience and benevolence, and steadily attentive only to heavenly things, while yet he had a taste, a spirit, and a genius, which might have shone among the greatest statesmen and men of letters that ever lived.

Of St. Peter, we have by no means so large an account as of St. Paul. The last view we have of him in scripture, presents him to us at Antioch. This was probably about the year 50. After this, he was employed in spreading the gospel,—principally among his own countrymen, but one cannot suppose exclusively of Gentiles,—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. His two epistles were directed to the Hebrew converts of these countries. And if he was far less successful than Paul among the Gentiles, he was much more so than that great man was among the Jews. He, who wrought effectually in Paul among the former, was mighty in Peter among the latter. It should ever be remembered, who alone did the work, and gave the increase.

Peter probably came to Rome about the year 63. Thence, a little before his martyrdom, he wrote his two epistles. Strange fictions have been invented of his acts at Rome, of which I shall sufficiently testify my disbelief by silence,—the method which I intend constantly to use in things of this nature. It is evident, however, that he here met again with that same Simon the sorcerer, whom he had rebuked long ago in Samaria, and who was practising his sorceries in a much higher style in the metropolis. No doubt the apostle opposed him successfully; but we have no account of this matter, except a very vague and declamatory one by Eusebius.—At length, when Paul was martyred under Nero, Peter suffered with him, by crucifixion with his head down-

ward,—a kind of death which he himself desired, most probably from an unfeigned humility, that he might not die in the same manner as his Lord had done. Nicephorus informs us, that he had spent two years at Rome. St. Peter, in his second epistle observes, that his Lord had shown him that his death was soon to take place. And this gives a degree of credibility to a story of Ambrose, related in one of his discourses, the purport of which is, that the pagans being inflamed against him, the brethren begged him to retreat during the violence of the persecution. Their intreaties, ardent as he was for martyrdom, moved him. He began to go out of the city by night. But coming to the gate, he saw Christ entering into the city. Whereupon he said, Lord, whither art thou going? Christ answered, I am coming hither to be crucified again. Peter hence understood that Christ was to be crucified again in his servant. This induced him voluntarily to return; and he satisfied the minds of the brethren with this account, and was soon after seized and crucified. Whoever considers the very solemn manner in which our Lord foretold the violent death of this apostle, in the close of St. John's gospel; and that, in his second epistle, he himself declared that his divine Master had shown him, that he should quickly put off his tabernacle, will find no difficulty in conceiving, that the vision now related from Ambrose might have taken place a little before the writing of this epistle: and, that the writing of the epistle may have a little time preceded his seizure and violent death. I mention this as a probable conjecture only. The story itself is consonant to the miraculous powers then in the church; and its evidence rests on the character of Ambrose himself. An Italian bishop, whose integrity and understanding are equally respectable.

Peter's wife had been called to martyrdom a little before himself. He saw her led to death; and re-

joiced at the grace of God vouchsafed to her; and, addressing her by name, exhorted and comforted her with "Remember the Lord."

There are two striking attestations to the character of St. Peter, which may be fairly drawn from the sacred writings. As it is allowed on all hands that he authorized the publication of St. Mark's gospel, had he been disposed to spare his own character, he would not have suffered the shameful denial of his Master to have been described, as it is in that evangelist, with more aggravated circumstances of guilt, and with fainter views of his repentance, than are to be found in the other evangelists. I am indebted for the other remark to Bishop Gregory, the first of that name. In his second epistle, St. Peter gives the most honourable attestation to the apostle Paul's epistles, though he must know that in one of them—that to the Galatians—his own conduct on a particular occasion was censured. This is evidently above nature. The most unfeigned humility appears to have been an eminent part of the character of this apostle, who, in his early days, was remarkable for the violence of his temper. His natural character was no uncommon one. Frank, open, active, courageous; sanguine in his attachments and in his passions; no way deficient, but not eminent, in understanding,—a plain honest man; yet, by grace and supernatural wisdom, rendered an instrument of the greatest good in the conversion of numbers, and only inferior to St. Paul. He seems to have lived long in a state of matrimony; and by Clement's account, was industrious in the education of his children.

Mark was sister's son to Barnabas, the son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem. He was probably brought up in Christianity from early life; and his conduct, for some time, gives credibility to an opinion, tolerably confirmed by experience, that early converts, or those who have been religious

brought up, do not generally make that vigorous progress in divine things which those do, whose conversion has commenced after a life of much sin and vanity. Their views are apt to be comparatively faint, and their dispositions in religion languid and indolent. We are told by Epiphanius, that Mark was one of those who were offended at the words of Christ recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John; and that he then forsook him, but was afterwards recovered to his Saviour by means of Peter. After our Lord's ascension, he attended his uncle Barnabas with Paul, but soon left them and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas however hoping the best from one whom he held so dear, proposed him to Paul as their companion on some future occasion. After the rupture which this occasioned between the two apostles, Barnabas took him as his companion to Cyprus. Undoubtedly his character improved. Some plants are slow of growth, but attain at length great vigour, and bear much fruit. Even Paul himself, who had been so much offended with him, at length declared, "he is profitable to me for the ministry." From the epistle to the Colossians, it is evident that he was with the apostle in his imprisonment at Rome. This was in the year 62. His gospel was written by desire of the believers at Rome about two years after. I know not when to fix the time of his coming to Egypt. But he is allowed to have founded the church of Alexandria, and to have been buried there. He was succeeded by Anianus, of whom Eusebius gives the highest eulogium. It is evident that the society of those three great men, Barnabas, Paul, and Peter, at different times, was very useful to him. Probably his natural indolence needed such incentives. In Mark then, we seem to have noticed one of the first promoters of Christianity, of a cast of mind different from any we have hitherto reviewed. The variety of tempers and talents employed in the service of

God, and sanctified by the same divine energy, affords a field of speculation neither unpleasing nor unprofitable.

Of the labours of nine apostles, James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Jude, Simon, and Matthias, scarcely any thing is recorded.

Of John the apostle a few valuable fragments may be collected. He was present at the council of Jerusalem, which was held about the year 50 : nor is it probable, that he left Judea till that time. Asia Minor was the great theatre of his ministry, particularly Ephesus, the care of which church remained with him after the decease of the rest of the apostles. The breaking out of the war in Judea most probably obliged the apostle to bid a total farewell to his native country. While he resided at Ephesus, going once to bathe there, he perceived that Cerinthus was in the bath : He came out again hastily : Let us flee, says he, lest the bath should fall, while Cerinthus, an enemy of truth, is within it. The same story is told of Ebion as well as of Cerinthus : they were both heretics, and of a similar character : and it is an easy mistake for a reporter of the story to confound names ; but if the whole should have had no foundation, it is not easy to account for the fiction.

The testimony of Irenæus, who had it from persons who received their information from Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, seems sufficiently authentic. Irenæus, a man of exquisite judgment, evidently believed the story himself ; and surely the opinion of such a person, who lived near those times, must outweigh the fanciful criticisms and objections of modern authors. The fashion of the present age, humanely sceptical, and clothing profane indifference with the name of candour, is ever ready to seduce even good men into a disbelief of facts of this nature, however well attested. But let the circumstances of St. John be well considered. He was a

surviving apostolical luminary. Heretical pravity was deeply spreading its poison. Sentiments, very derogatory to the person, work, and honour of Jesus Christ, were diffused with great perverseness of industry. What should have been the deportment of this truly benevolent apostle? I doubt not but he was ever forward to relieve personal distresses: but to have joined the company of the principal supporters of heresy, would have been to countenance it. He well knew the arts of seducers. They were ready always to avail themselves of the seeming countenance of apostles or of apostolical men; and thence to take an opportunity of strengthening themselves, and of diffusing their poison. Such has been their conduct in all ages. Having no ground of their own to stand on, they have continually endeavoured to rest on the authority of some great man, of allowed evangelical respectability. This artful management, clothed with the pretence of charity, points out to the real friends of the Lord Jesus what they ought to do, from motives of real benevolence to mankind,—namely, to bear patiently the odious charge of bigotry, and to take every opportunity of testifying their abhorrence of heretical views and hypocritical actions. Humanly speaking, I see not how divine truth is to be supported in the world but by this procedure; and I scruple not to say, that St. John's conduct appears not only defensible, but laudable, and worthy the imitation of Christians. It is agreeable to what he himself declares in one of his short epistles, addressed to a Christian lady,—that if “any come to her house, and bring not the true doctrine of the gospel, she ought not to receive him, nor bid him God speed; because to bid him God speed, would make her a partaker of his evil deeds.” His menacing language concerning Diotrefes, in the other epistle to Gaius, breathes what some would call the same uncharitable spirit. And when I see St. Paul shaking his garment against the infidel

Jews, and hear him saying, "Your blood be on your own heads, I am clean;" and when I find him warning the Galatians thus, "If an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed," and wishing that they which troubled them, "were even cut off,"—I am instructed how to judge of the indignation of holy St. John against Cerinthus.

Indeed the primitive Christians were even more careful to avoid the society of false Christians than of open unbelievers. With the latter they had, at times, some free intercourse; with the former they refused even to eat. We have already seen, how our Saviour commends the impatience and discernment of the Ephesians, who could not bear false professors.—They had tried those who call themselves "apostles, and are not; and had found them liars."

It is one of the designs of this history, to show the actual conduct of real Christians in life and conversation: and the relation before us, of John's behaviour to Cerinthus, illustrates this. But,—if we must so far humour the taste of Socinians and sceptics as to allow ourselves to doubt the existence of well-attested facts, because they contradict the fashionable notion, we shall injure the faithfulness of history, make present manners the standard of credibility, and practically adopt a very absurd modern position,—that the divine charity of a sound Christian, is the same thing as the refined humanity of a philosophical heretic. I would ask any person, to whom the infection of modern manners renders this reasoning of difficult digestion, whether he ought more to approve of the conduct of that gentleman who should mix in easy familiarity with a company of murderers, or of him who should fly from it with horror. If we believe spiritual murderers, who labour to ruin souls by propagating Antichristian views, to be still more pernicious than the former,

we shall not be under any difficulty in vindicating St. John.

The unreasonable doubts which have arisen in our times, concerning the fact we have been considering, appear to me to originate in a spirit of heresy. There is another fact, respecting the same apostle, which comes before us loaded with similar sceptical objections: and these are to be ascribed, I fear, to the prevalence of infidel ideas. Tertullian tells us that by order of Domitian, John was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and came out again without being hurt. This must have happened, most probably, during the latter part of the reign of that emperor; and Tertullian was certainly competent to relate such a fact as this: Yet it is now generally disbelieved or doubted. Is it merely because we see no miracles in our own times? Let the reader transport himself into the first century, and he will see no more improbability, in the nature of the thing, that a miracle should be wrought in favour of St. John, than in favour of Paul, as recorded in the last chapter of the Acts. The miracle softened not the heart of Domitian, who would probably suppose the apostle to have been fortified by magical incantations. He banished him into the solitary isle of Patmos, where he was favoured with the visions of the Apocalypse. After Domitian's death, he returned from Patmos, and governed the Asiatic churches. There he remained till the time of Trajan. At the request of the bishops, he went to the neighbouring churches, partly to ordain pastors, and partly to regulate the congregations. At one place in his tour, observing a youth of a remarkably interesting countenance, he warmly recommended him to the care of a particular pastor. The young man was baptized; and, for a time, lived as a Christian. But being gradually corrupted by company, he became idle and intemperate; and at length so dishonest, as to become a captain of a band of robbers.

Some time after, John had occasion to inquire of the pastor concerning the young man, who told him, that he was now dead to God; and that he inhabited a mountain over against his church. John, in the vehemence of his charity, went to the place, and exposed himself to be taken by the robbers. ‘Bring me,’ says he, ‘to your captain.’ The young robber beheld him coming; and as soon as he knew the aged and venerable apostle, he was struck with shame, and fled.—St. John followed him and cried, ‘My son, why fliest thou from thy father, unarmed and old? Fear not; as yet there remaineth hope of salvation. Believe me, Christ hath sent me.’ Hearing this, the young man stood still, trembled, and wept bitterly. John prayed, exhorted, and brought him back to the society of Christians; nor did he leave him, till he judged him fully restored by divine grace.

Even the truth of this last relation has been questioned by Basnage. But as I know no reason for hesitation, I shall leave it with the serious reader, who loves to behold the tokens of grace from age to age dispensed to sinners.

We have yet another story of St. John, short, but pleasing, and which has had the good fortune to pass uncontradicted. Being now very old, and unable to say much in Christian assemblies, “Children, love one another,” was his constantly repeated sermon. Being asked, why he told them only one thing, he answered, that “nothing else was needed.” This account rests on the single testimony of Jerom, so far as I have found. But as it seems to fall in with the spirit of the age more than the others, its truth is allowed. We may hence observe how little regard is paid to real evidence by many critics, who seem to make modern manners the test of historical credibility. Whatever fact shows the spirit of zeal, the reality of miracles, or the work of the Divine Spirit on the heart, must be questioned: What indu-

feeling or humanity, this only may be allowed to stand its ground. In truth, I should be sorry to have so beautiful a story called in question; but its evidence is by no means superior to those of the three former.

John lived three or four years after his return to Asia, having been preserved to the age of almost a hundred years, for the benefit of the church of Christ, an inestimable pattern of charity and goodness.

Of the Apostle Barnabas nothing is known, except what is recorded in the Acts. There we have an honourable encomium of his character, and a particular description of his joint labours with St. Paul. It is a great injury to him, to imagine the epistle which goes by his name, to be his.

Ecclesiastical historians, who have passed over the most glorious scenes of real Christianity, have yet, with minute accuracy, given us lists of heretics subtilized by refined subdivisions without end. It seems more useful to notice them, as they stand contradistinguished to that FAITH which was once delivered to the saints. Tertullian reduces the heretics of the apostolic times to two classes, the Docetæ and the Ebionites. Theodoret also gives the same account of them.

Of the instruments of Satan in these things, Simon who had been rebuked by Peter in Samaria, was the most remarkable; he was the father of the Gnostics or Docetæ, and of a number of heretical opinions and practices of the first century. However obscure the history of Simon himself may be, the leading opinions of the Docetæ are sufficiently obvious. They held that the Son of God had no proper humanity, and that he died on the cross only in appearance. Cerinthus allowed him a real human nature: he considered Jesus as a man born of Joseph and Mary, but supposed that Christ, whom yet all the heretics looked on as properly inferior to the supreme God,

descended from heaven, and united himself to the man Jesus.

The Ebionites were not very different from the Cerinthians: they removed the appearance of mystery from the subject: in general they looked on Jesus Christ as a mere man, born of Mary and her husband, though a man of a most excellent character. Whoever thinks it needful to examine these things more nicely, may consult Irenæus and Eusebius: the account of Ebion in the latter is short, but sufficiently clear.

It is not to be wondered at, that with such low ideas of the Redeemer's person, the Ebionites denied the virtue of his atoning blood; and laboured to establish justification by the works of the law. Their rejection of the divine authority of St. Paul's epistles, and their accusation of him as an Antinomian, naturally arise from their system. Tertullian tells us, that this was a Jewish sect: and their observance of Jewish rites makes his account the more credible.

These two heretical schemes, the one opposing the humanity of Christ, the other annihilating his divinity, were the inventions of men leaning to their own understandings, and unwilling to admit the great mystery of godliness,—“God manifest in the flesh.” The primitive Christians held, that the Redeemer was both God and man, equally possessed of the real properties of both natures; and no man, willing to take his creed from the New Testament, ever thought otherwise; the proofs of both natures in one person, Christ Jesus, being abundantly diffused through the sacred books. One single verse in the ninth chapter to the Romans, expressing both, is sufficient to confound all the critical powers of heretics; and therefore, on the slightest grounds, they have been compelled to have recourse to their usual method of suspecting the soundness of the sacred text. The only real difficulty in this subject

is, for man to be brought to believe, on divine authority, that doctrine, the grounds of which we cannot comprehend. Though we have just as good reason to doubt the union of soul and body in man, from our equal ignorance of the bond of that union, yet proud men, unacquainted with the internal misery and depravity of nature, which renders a complete character, like that of Christ, so divinely suitable to our wants, and so exactly proper to mediate between God and man, soon discovered a disposition to oppose the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus; and, as there were two ways of doing this—by taking away either one or the other of the two natures—we see at once the origin of the two sects before us. The doctrine of the atonement was opposed by both;—by the Docetæ in their denial of the real human nature of Jesus; and by the Ebionites in their denial of the Divine Nature, which stamps an infinite value on his sufferings.

Such were the perversions of the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God. Nor did the doctrine of justification by faith only, which St. Paul had so strenuously supported, escape a similar treatment. In all ages this doctrine has been either fiercely opposed, or basely abused. The epistle to the Galatians describes the former treatment; the epistle of Jude the latter. The memoirs of these heretics, short and imperfect as they are, inform us of some, who professed an extraordinary degree of sanctity, and affected to be abstracted altogether from the flesh, and to live in excessive abstemiousness. We find also that there were others, who, as if to support their Christian liberty, lived in sin with greediness, and indulged themselves in all the gratifications of sensuality. Nothing short of a spiritual illumination and direction can indeed secure the improvement of the grace of the gospel to the real interests of holiness. At this day there are persons, who think that the entire renun-

ciation of all our own works in point of dependence must be the destruction of practical religion; and they are thence led to seek salvation “by the works of the law:” while others, admitting in words the grace of Jesus Christ, encourage themselves in open sin. A truly humbled frame, and a clear insight into the beauty of holiness, through the effectual influence of the divine Spirit, will teach me to live a sanctified life by the faith of Jesus. The Gentile converts by the Gnostic heresy, and the Jewish by that of Ebion, were considerably corrupted towards the close of the century. The latter, indeed, of these heresies had been gradually making progress for some time. We have seen, that the object of the first council of Jerusalem was to guard men against the imposition of Mosaic observances, and to teach them to rely only on the grace of Christ for salvation. But self-righteousness is a weed of too quick a growth to be easily eradicated. The Pharisaic Christians, we may apprehend, were not immediately advanced to the full size of heresy. But when they proceeded to reject St. Paul’s writings, we may fairly conclude, that they fully rejected the article of justification. A separation was made; and the Ebionites, as a distinct body of men, deserved the name of heretics.

St. Paul indeed, who, with an eagle’s eye, had explored the growing evil, was now no more in the world. But the HEAD of the church prolonged the life of his favourite John to the extreme age of almost a hundred: and his authority checked the progress of heretical pravity. He resided much at Ephesus, where Paul had declared, that grievous wolves should make their appearance. Jerom says, that he wrote his gospel at the desire of the bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and Ebion. Indeed such expressions as these, “the passover, a feast of the Jews,”—and, “that sabbath day was an high day,” seem to indicate that the Jewish polity was now no

more, it not being natural to give such explications of customs except to those, who had no opportunity of ocular inspection. I cannot but think, that Dr. Lardner, who is no friend to the vital doctrines of Christianity, has betrayed his predilection for Socinianism, in his attempts to show that St. John in his gospel did not intend to oppose any particular heresies. In truth, there are various internal proofs which corroborate the testimony of Jerom. The very beginning of his gospel is an authoritative declaration of the proper deity of Jesus Christ: the attentive reader cannot but recollect various discourses to the same purport: the confession of Thomas, after his resurrection, stands single in St. John's gospel: the particular pains which he takes, to assure us of the real death of his Master, and of the issuing of real blood and water, from his wounded side, are delivered with an air of one zealous to obviate the error of the Docetæ: nor can I understand his laying so great a stress on Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh in any other manner.

While this apostle lived, the heretics were much discountenanced. And it is certain that Gnostics and Ebionites were always looked on as perfectly distinct from the Christian church. There needs no more evidence to prove this, than their arrangement by Irenæus and Eusebius under heretical parties. Doubtless they called themselves Christians; and so did all heretics, for obvious reasons. and, for reasons equally obvious, all, who are tender of the fundamentals of Christ's religion, should not own their right to the appellation. Before we dismiss them I would remark,—

1. That it does not appear by any evidence which I can find, that these men were persecuted for their religion. Retaining the Christian name; and yet glorifying man's righteousness, wisdom, and strength, "they spake of the world, and the world heard them." The apostle John, in saying this, had his

eye, I believe, on the Docetæ particularly. In our own times, persons of a similar stamp would willingly ingratiate themselves with real Christians; and yet at the same time avoid the cross of Christ, and whatever would expose them to the enmity of the world. We have the testimony of Justin Martyr, that Simon was honoured in the pagan world, even to idolatry. What stress is laid on this circumstance in the New Testament, as an evidence of the characters of men in religious concerns, is well known.

2. If it be made an objection against evangelical principles, that numbers, who profess them, have run into a variety of abuses, perversions and contentions, we have seen enough, even in the first century, of the same kind of evils, to convince us, that such objections militate not against divine truth, but might have been made with equal force against the apostolical age.

3. A singular change, in one respect, has taken place in the Christian world. The two heretical parties above described, were not much unlike the Arians and Socinians at this day. The former have, radically, the same ideas as the Docetæ, though it would be unjust to accuse them of the Antinomian abominations which defiled the followers of Simon: the latter are the very counterpart of the Ebionites. The Trinitarians were then the body of the church; and so much superior was their influence and numbers, that the other two were treated as heretics. At present, the two parties, who agree in lessening the dignity of Christ, though in an unequal manner, are carrying on a vigorous controversy against one another, while the Trinitarians are despised by both, as unworthy the notice of men of reason and letters. Serious and humble minds will, however, insist on the necessity of our understanding that certain fundamental principles are necessary to constitute the real gospel. The divinity of Christ,—his atonement,—

justification by faith,—regeneration,—these they will have observed to be the principles of the primitive church : and, within this inclosure, the whole of that piety which produced such glorious effects, has been confined : and it is worthy the attention of learned men to consider, whether the same remark may not be made in all ages.

4. We have seen a more astonishing revolution in the human mind and in human manners, than ever took place in any age, effected without any human power, legal or illegal, and even against the united opposition of all the powers then in the world, and this too not in countries rude or uncivilized, but in the most humanized, the most learned, and the most polished part of the globe—within the Roman empire, no part of which was exempted from a sensible share in its effects.—This empire, within the first century at least, seems to have been the proper limits of Christian conquests.

If an infidel or sceptic can produce any thing like this, effected by Mahometanism or by any other religion of human invention, he may then with some plausibility compare those religions with Christianity : but, as the gospel stands unrivalled in a manner of subduing the minds of men,—the argument for its divinity, from the manner of its propagation in the world, will remain invincible.

And, surely, every dispassionate observer must confess, that the change was from BAD to GOOD. No man will venture to say, that the religious and moral principles of Jews and Gentiles, before their conversion to Christianity, were good. The idolatrous abominations, and ferocity of the Gentile world will be allowed to have been not less than they are described in the first chapter to the Romans : and the writings of Horace and Juvenal will prove, that the picture is not exaggerated. The extreme wickedness of the Jews is graphically delineated by their own

historian, and is neither denied nor doubted by any one. What but the influence of God, and an EF-FUSION of his Holy Spirit,—the first of the kind since the coming of Christ, and the measure and standard for regulating our views of all succeeding ones,—can account for such a change? From the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles, I have drawn the greatest part of the narrative; but the little that has been added from other sources is not inconsistent.—Here are thousands of men turned from the practice of every wickedness to the practice of every virtue: many, very suddenly, or at least in a short space of time, reformed in understanding, in inclination, in affection; knowing, loving, and confiding in God: from a state of mere selfishness converted into the purest philanthropists; living only to please God, and to exercise kindness toward one another; and all of them recovering really, what philosophy only pretended to,—the dominion of reason over passion; unfeignedly subject to their Maker; rejoicing in his favour amidst the severest sufferings; and serenely waiting for their dismissal into a land of blissful immortality. That all this must be of God, is demonstrative: but the important inference, which teaches the divine authority of Christ, and the wickedness and danger of despising, or even neglecting him, is not always attended to by those who are most concerned in it.

But the Christian church was not yet in possession of any external dignity or political importance. No one NATION as yet was Christian, though thousands of individuals were so;—chiefly of the middling and lower ranks. The modern improvements of civil society have taught men, however, that these are the strength of a nation; and that whatever is praiseworthy is far more commonly diffused among them, than among the noble and great. In the present age, then, it should be no disparagement to the character of the first Christians, that the

church was chiefly composed of persons too low in life, to be of any weight in the despotic systems of government which then prevailed. We have seen one person of uncommon genius and endowments, and two belonging to the imperial family, but scarcely any more, either of rank or learning, connected with Christianity. We ought not then to be surprised, that Christians are so little noticed by Tacitus and Josephus: these historians are only intent on sublunary and general politics; they give no attention to the eternal welfare of individuals.

In doctrines, the primitive Christians agreed. They all worshipped the one living and true God, who made himself known to them in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these they were taught to worship by the very office of baptism performed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the whole economy of grace so constantly reminded them of their obligations to the Father who chose them to salvation, to the Saviour who died for them, and to the Comforter who supported and sanctified them, and was so closely connected with their experience and practice, that they were perpetually incited to worship the Divine Three in One. They all concurred in feeling conviction of sin, of helplessness, of a state of perdition: in relying on the atoning blood, perfect righteousness, and prevalent intercession of Jesus, as their only hope of heaven. Regeneration by the Holy Ghost was their common privilege, and without his constant influence they owned themselves obnoxious only to sin and vanity. Their community of goods and their love feasts, though discontinued at length, probably because found impracticable, demonstrated their superlative charity and heavenly mindedness. Yet a gloomy cloud hung over the conclusion of the first century.

The first impressions made by the effusion of the *Spirit* are generally the strongest and the most deci-

sively distinct from the spirit of the world. But human depravity, overborne for a time, arises afresh, particularly in the next generation. Hence the disorders of schism and heresy. Their tendency is to destroy the pure work of God. The first Christians, with the purest charity to the PERSONS of heretics, gave their ERRORS no quarter, but discountenanced them by every reasonable method.

The heretics, on the contrary, endeavoured to unite themselves with Christians. If the same methods be at this day continued; if the heretic endeavour to promote his false religion by pretended charity, and the Christians stand aloof from him, without dreading the charge of bigotry, each act in character, as their predecessors did. The heretics, by weakening men's attachment to Christ, and the schismatics by promoting a worldly and uncharitable spirit, each did considerable mischief: but it was the less, because Christians carefully kept themselves distinct from heretics, and thus set limits to the infection.

It has been of unspeakable detriment to the Christian religion, to conceive that all who profess it are believers of it, properly speaking. Whereas very many are Christians in NAME only, never attending to the NATURE of the gospel at all. Not a few glory in sentiments subversive of its genius and spirit. And there are still more who go not so far in opposition to godliness; yet by making light of the whole work of grace on the heart, they are found on a strict examination to be as decidedly void of true Christianity. We have seen the first Christians individually converted; and as human nature needs the same change still, the particular instances of conversion described in the Acts are models for us at this day.

CENTURY II.

I—THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF TRAJAN.

THE master of the Roman world, in the beginning of this century, was the renowned Trajan. His predecessor, Nerva, had restored the Christian exiles, and granted a full toleration to the church. Hence the last of the apostles had returned to his station at Ephesus, and slept in the Lord, before the short interval of tranquillity was closed by the persecuting spirit of Trajan. Whatever explication may be given or conjectured of the cause of his dislike of Christians, he had a confirmed prejudice against them, and meditated the extinction of the name. Nor does it appear that he ever changed his sentiments, or retracted his edicts against them.

There is an account of his persecution in his correspondence with Pliny the governor of Bithynia, a character well known in classical history. The two epistles between the emperor and the governor deserve to be transcribed at length. They seem to have been written in 106 or 107.¹

¹ Or perhaps in 102 or 103 of the vulgar era. The reader will do well to keep in mind, that many disagreements in chronology are accounted for by considering that the birth of our Saviour is placed by some of the best chronologers four years before our vulgar era.

C. Pliny to Trajan, Emperor.

‘ Health. It is my usual custom, Sir, to refer all things of which I harbour any doubts to you. For who can better direct my judgment in its hesitation, or instruct my understanding in its ignorance. I never had the fortune to be present at any examination of Christians, before I came into this province. I am therefore at a loss to determine what is the usual object either of inquiry or of punishment, and to what length either of them is to be carried. It has also been with me a question very problematical, whether any distinction should be made between the young and the old, the tender and the robust; whether any room should be given for repentance, or the guilt of Christianity once incurred is not to be expiated by the most unequivocal retractation; whether the name itself, abstracted from any flagitiousness of conduct, or the crimes connected with the name, be the object of punishment. In the meantime this has been my method, with respect to those who were brought before me as Christians. I asked them whether they were Christians: if they pleaded guilty, I interrogated them twice afresh, with a menace of capital punishment. In case of obstinate perseverance I ordered them to be executed. For of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the magistrate. Some were infected with the same madness whom, on account of their privilege of citizenship, I reserved to be sent to Rome to be referred to your tribunal. In the course of this business, information pouring in, as is usual when they are encouraged, more cases occurred. An anonymous libel was exhibited, with a catalogue of names of persons, who yet declared that they were not Christians then, or ever had been; and they repeated after me an invocation of the gods

and of your image, which, for this purpose, I had ordered to be brought with the images of the deities. They performed sacred rites with wine and frankincense, and execrated Christ; none of which things I am told a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. On this account I dismissed them. Others named by an informer, first affirmed, and then denied the charge of Christianity; declaring that they had been Christians, but had ceased to be so, some three years ago, others still longer, some even twenty years ago. All of them worshipped your image, and the statues of the gods, and also execrated Christ. And this was the account which they gave of the nature of the religion they once had professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error, namely, that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, with an obligation of not committing any wickedness; but on the contrary, of abstaining from thefts, robberies and adulteries; also of not violating their promise or denying a pledge; after which it was their custom to separate and to meet again at a promiscuous harmless meal, from which last practice they however desisted, after the publication of my edict, in which, agreeable to your orders, I forbade any societies of that sort. On which account I judged it the more necessary to inquire, BY TORTURE, from two females who were said to be deaconesses, what is the real truth. But nothing could I collect, except a depraved and excessive superstition. Deferring therefore any farther investigation, I determined to consult you. For the number of culprits is so great, as to call for serious consultation. Many persons are informed against, of every age and of both sexes; and more still will be in the same situation. The contagion of the superstition hath spread not only through cities, but even villages and the country. *Not that I think it impossible to check and to cor-*

rect it. The success of my endeavours hitherto forbids such desponding thoughts : for the temples, once almost desolate, begin to be frequented, and the sacred solemnities, which had long been intermitted, are now attended afresh, and the sacrificial victims are now sold everywhere, which once could scarcely find a purchaser. Whence I conclude that many might be reclaimed, were the hope of impunity on repentance absolutely confirmed.'

Trajan to Pliny.

' ' You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry which you have made concerning Christians. For truly no one general rule can be laid down, which will apply itself to all cases. These people must not be sought after :—if they are brought before you and convicted ; let them be capitally punished, yet with this restriction, that if any one renounce Christianity, and evidence his sincerity by supplicating our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, he shall obtain pardon for the future, on his repentance. But anonymous libels in no case ought to be attended to ; for the precedent would be of the worst sort, and perfectly incongruous to the maxims of my government.'

The moral character of Pliny is one of the most amiable in all pagan history ; yet does it appear, that he joined with his master Trajan in his hatred of Christians. In the course of this history, many instances of the same kind will occur. Trajan's character is doubtless much inferior to Pliny's ;—it is indeed illustrious by reason of great talents, and great exploits ; but by the testimony of Dio, Spartan, and Julian, stained with flagrant vices ; and, as is generally confessed, tarnished by an extravagant ambition. But how is it to be accounted for, that men, who seem enamoured with the beauty of virtue, should turn from it with perfect disgust, and even persecute it with rancour, when it appears in

the most genuine colours? Let those who imagine such men as Pliny to be good and virtuous in the proper sense of the words, try to solve this phenomenon on their own principles. On those of the real gospel the question is not hard to be determined. Admitting that Pliny might at first be prejudiced against Christians from misrepresentation, how happens it, that he continues so after better information, even when he is convinced that no more evil is to be found in the Christians of Bithynia, that their meetings are peaceful, and the cult aimed at by them, not only innocent, but laudable? The truth is, virtue in Pliny's writings, and virtue in St. Paul's, mean not the same thing. For humility, the basis of a Christian's virtue, the pagan has not even a name in his language. The glory of God is the end of virtue in the system of one,—his own glory is the end of virtue in the system of the other. The Christians of Bithynia would be able to give the severe inquisitor "a reason of the hope that was in them with meekness and fear," and then offering according to the will of God, to commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as to a faithful Creator. These and other precious sentiments in St. Peter's first epistle, which was addressed to some of their fathers, possibly to some of themselves then alive, would now be remembered with peculiar force. A vain-glorious mind like Pliny's, elated with conscious rectitude, would scorn to hear of being saved by the atoning blood of Jesus, would not believe the representation of human nature which the Christians would give him, and would prefer his own reason before the instruction of the Holy Spirit. Had he been, like Cicero, deeply tinged with the academical philosophy of Greece, like him he would have glomed in sceptical ambiguity, or have inclined to the atheistic view to which most of the old philosophers were devoted. But as he seems to have imitated him, rather in his

passion for oratorical glory, than in his philosophical spirit, he rested in the vulgar creed, highly absurd as it was, and preferred it to the purest dictates of Christianity. The former thwarted not his pride and his lusts: the latter required the humiliation of the one, and the mortification of the other.

In all ages, men even of amiable morals, if destitute of true holiness, are enemies of the gospel.—We here see the true reason of this enmity; which is not capable of being abated by argument: for if that had been the case, Pliny might have seen the iniquity of his proceedings. To call a thing madness and depraved superstition, on the face of which he sees much good and no evil, is the height of unreasonableness. But it is practised by many at this day, who call themselves Christians, and yet are really as averse to the gospel as Pliny was. Now if we were not willing to be deceived by mere names, but would enter into the spirit of things, it would not be difficult to understand, who they are that resemble Pliny, and who they are that resemble the Christians of Bithynia.

In fact, as there are now, so there were then, persons who worshipped Christ as their God, who loved one another as brethren united in him: men who derived from his influence support under the severest pressures: who were calumniated by others: who were treated as silly people, on account of that humble and self-denying spirit, by which they kept up communion with their Saviour on earth; and who expected to enjoy him in heaven.—It was not the fault of Trajan and Pliny, that such principles were not exterminated from the earth. They hated the men and their religion.

The difference between the persecutors and the sufferers is remarkable with respect to the spirit of politics. The religion of Trajan was governed by this spirit: and his minister thinks it needful to force men to follow the PAGAN religion, whether they

believed it to be right or not. Persecuting edicts appear to have been in force against Christians before the correspondence which we have seen; and Nerva's toleration seems to have ceased. But the Christians showed, that their Master's kingdom was not of this world: they were meek and passive, as Christ himself had been, and as Peter had exhorted them to be. Their number was very large in Bithynia, capable surely of raising a rebellion troublesome to the state; and they would have done so, if their spirits had been as turbulent as those of many pretended Christians. 'But they were subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.' If there had been the least suspicion of a seditious spirit among them, Pliny must have mentioned it; and their discontinuance of their feasts of charity, after they found them disagreeable to government, is a proof of their loyal and peaceable temper.

In Asia, Arrius Antoninus persecuted them with extreme fury. I am not certain whether his persecution belongs to the reign of Trajan; but as there was an Antonius very intimate with Pliny, the following story of him, from Tertullian, may not improperly be introduced there. The whole body of Christians, wearied with constant hardships, presented themselves before his tribunal: he ordered a few of them to execution, and said to the rest, 'Miserable people, if you choose death, you may find precipices and halters enow.' I am willing to believe, that the Christians hoped to disarm the persecutor by the sight of their numbers.

One of the most venerable characters at this time was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, the successor of St. James. Jerusalem indeed was no more, but the church still existed in some part of Judea. Some heretics accused him, as a Christian, before Atticus the Roman governor. He was then a hundred and twenty years old, and was scourged many days. *The persecutor was astonished at his hardiness; but*

not moved with pity for his sufferings:—at last he ordered him to be crucified.

It was in the year 107 that Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was martyred for the faith of Jesus. On the death of Euodius, about the year seventy, he had been appointed in his room by the apostles who were then alive. He governed the church during this long period. Nor was it a small indication of the continued grace of God to that city, to have been blessed so long with such a luminary. We must be content with the short character given of his ministry in the acts of Ignatius, a piece of martyrology first published in 1647 by Archbishop Usher, from two old manuscripts which have stronger marks of credibility than is usual in such compositions.

‘He was a man in all things like to the apostles. As a good governor by the helm of prayer and fasting, by the constancy of his doctrine and spiritual labour, he opposed himself to the floods of the adversary: he was like a divine lamp illuminating the hearts of the faithful by his exposition of the holy scriptures; and lastly, to preserve his church, he scrupled not freely to expose himself to a bitter death.’ These acts were compiled by those who went with him from Antioch, and were eye-witnesses of his sufferings.

Ambition and the lust of power were not stronger features in the character of Cæsar, than the desire of martyrdom was in that of Ignatius. Divine Providence, however, preserved him for the benefit of the church during the persecution of Domitian, and reserved him to the time of Trajan. This prince being come to Antioch about the tenth year of his reign, in the year 107, in his way to the Parthian war, Ignatius, fearing for the Christians, and hoping to avert the storm by offering himself to suffer in their stead, came voluntarily into the presence of Trajan. I shall deliver the conference as it stands in the acts of Ignatius, a monument of false glory shrouding itself

under superstition and ignorance, on the one hand, and of true glory supported by the faith and hope of Jesus on the other.

Being introduced into the emperor's presence, he was thus addressed by Trajan. 'What an impious spirit art thou, both to transgress our commands and to inveigle others into the same folly, to their ruin! Ignatius answered, Theophorus ought not to be called so: forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed far from the servants of God. But if you call me impious because I am hostile to evil spirits, I own the charge in that respect. For I dissolve all their snares, through the inward support of Christ the heavenly King. TRAJ. Pray who is Theophorus? IGN. He who has Christ in his breast. TRAJ. And thinkest thou not that gods reside in us also, who fight for us against our enemies? IGN. You mistake in calling the demons of the nations by the name of gods. For there is only ONE God who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; and ONE Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom be my portion! TRAJ. His kingdom do you say, who was crucified under Pilate? IGN. His who crucified my sin with its author, and has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of those who carry him in their heart. TRAJ. Dost thou then carry him who was crucified within thee? IGN. I do: for it is written, "I dwell in them, and walk in them." Then Trajan pronounced this sentence against him: 'Since Ignatius confesses that he carries within himself him that was crucified, we command that he be carried bound by soldiers to Great Rome, there to be thrown to the wild beasts, for the entertainment of the people.'

The learned Scaliger was puzzled to conceive what could induce Trajan to order his being sent so long a journey for execution. It might seem more natural for him to have directed that he should suffer in the view of his own flock, in order to deter them from

Christianity. But Trajan might think the example much more striking and extensive, by using the method which he took. At any rate providence undoubtedly displayed, in this way, much more abundantly the honours of the cross, as will appear by what follows. The doctrine of union with Christ by faith, now so much ridiculed, appears here in its full glory. And if ever we be called to scenes like these we shall feel the need of it strongly, and be sensible of the impotence of those schemes of mere human invention, which are often substituted in its room. Only Christ within can support the heart in the hour of severe trial. The boasted moral virtue of proud philosophers is radically defective and unsound.

The scene before us is august; and the state of Christendom at that time is much illustrated by it. The seven epistles of this great man, undoubtedly genuine as they are, and accurately distinguished from all corrupt interpolations, will come in aid to the acts of his martyrdom. By them he being dead yet speaketh: and what the gospel can do for men, who really believe it, and feel the energy of the Spirit of its divine Author, has not often been more illustriously displayed.

From Antioch he was hurried by his guards to Seleucia. Sailing thence, after great fatigue he arrived at Smyrna. While the ship remained in port, he was allowed the pleasure of visiting Polycarp, who was the bishop of the Christians there. They had been fellow-disciples of St. John; and the holy joy of their interview may be conceived by such persons as know what the love of Christ is, and how it operates in the breasts of those in whom he dwells. Deputies were sent from the various churches of Asia to attend and console him, and to receive some benefit by his spiritual communications. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons conversed with him. A general convocation seems to have taken place. Four of Ignatius's seven epistles were written from

Smyrna, to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome.

The church of Ephesus appears, from his epistle to them, still to have maintained its character of evangelical purity. Their zeal indeed had decayed, but was reviving; and the rage of persecution was the hot-bed which reanimated their souls, and made them fruitful again in faith, hope, and charity. The very titles by which he addresses them, demonstrate what their faith was, in common with that of the whole church at that time, and abundantly show the vanity of those whose dislike of the peculiar truths of Christianity induces them to suppose, that the ideas of predestination, election, and grace, were purely the systematic inventions of Augustine, and unknown to the primitive Christians. We are certain that St. Paul's epistles, and that particularly addressed to this church, are full of the same things.

‘Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the worthily happy church in Ephesus of Asia, blessed in the majesty and fulness of God the Father, predestinated before the world to be perpetually permanent in glory, immovable, united, and elect in the genuine suffering for the truth, by the will of the Father, and of Jesus Christ our God, much joy in Jesus Christ, and in his spotless grace.’ The character which he gives of their bishop Onesimus, raises our idea of him to a great degree. He calls him ‘inexpressible in charity, whom I beseech you to love according to Jesus Christ, and all of you to imitate him. Blessed be his name, who has counted you worthy to enjoy such a bishop.’ With him he honourably mentions also some presbyters or deacons of their church, ‘Through whom,’ says he, ‘I have seen you in all love.’ Onesimus probably was the fugitive slave of Philemon, a growing plant in St. Paul's time.

The unaffected charity and humility of Ignatius deserve our attention. He alone seemed uncon-

scious of his attainments, while the whole Christian world admired him. 'I do not,' says he, 'dictate to you, as if I were a person of any consequence. For though I am bound for the name of Christ, I am not yet perfected in Christ Jesus. For now I begin to be a disciple, and to speak to you as my teachers. For I ought to be sustained by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long-suffering. But since charity will not suffer me to be silent concerning you, for this reason I take upon me to exhort you to run together with me according to the mind of God.'

The letters of Ignatius add something to the stock of history, as they introduce to our acquaintance the two Asiatic churches of Magnesia and Tralles, which else had been unknown to us. In truth, that whole fertile region of Asia propria seems to have been more thoroughly evangelized than any other part of the world at that period. From the time of St. Paul's labours at Ephesus, "when all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks," to the martyrdom of Ignatius,—that is for half a century or upwards,—the truth as it is in Jesus was preserved in its purity in these churches: The opposers of the gospel could gain no footing at all in some of them; in others, they made no great, or at least, no abiding impressions; in some the fervour of piety was much declined; and in others, it still retained a considerable strength. A strong sense of the infinite value of Jesus in his Godhead, his priesthood, and his blood, prevailed in this region: faith and love were fed by the view of the Saviour; and patience in suffering for his name was one of their most common virtues.

Damas, the Bishop of Magnesia, was a young person whom Ignatius calls "worthy of God." Eminent grace in persons of tender years was sometimes in the primitive church distinguished by their advancement to the episcopacy. In his letter to the

Magnesians, he warns them not to despise his youth, but to imitate the holy Presbyters, who gave place to him, but not to him so properly, as to the Father of Jesus Christ.—‘Some persons, indeed, call a man a bishop, but do every thing independently of him. Such seem to me to have lost a good conscience, because their assemblies are not regulated with steadfastness and Christian order.’ He mentions also, with honour, Bassus and Apollonius as Presbyters, and Sotio the deacon, ‘whose happiness,’ says he, ‘may I partake of, because he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.’

Here, as elsewhere, he evidently points out three distinct ranks in the primitive church,—the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons. A blind and implicit submission to a hierarchy, however corrupt, worthless and ignorant, was then unknown. But a just and regular subordination, according to the ranks of men in the church, was much attended to; and nothing like it, humanly speaking, so much encourages and enables godly pastors to discharge their office with zeal and alacrity. Nor is it difficult to conceive what was the most customary mode of church-government in those times. In vain, I think will any modern church whatever set up a claim to exact resemblance. Usher’s model of reduced episcopacy seems to come the nearest to the plan of the primitive churches. At first, indeed, or for some time, church governors were only of two ranks, presbyters and deacons: at least, this appears to have been the case in particular instances, as at Philippi and at Ephesus: and the term bishop was confounded with that of presbyter. The church of Corinth continued long in this state, so far as one may judge by Clement’s epistle; and thence we may in part account for the continuance of their contentious spirit. As these churches grew numerous, they could never be all assembled in one place; the

Presbyters must have ministered to different congregations, though the church continued one. Toward the end of the first century, all the churches followed the model of the mother-church of Jerusalem, where one of the apostles was the first bishop. A settled presidency obtained, and the name of angel was at first given to the supreme ruler, though that of bishop soon succeeded. That this was the case in the seven churches of Asia, is certain. The address of the charges to him in the book of the Revelation demonstrates his superiority. The deacon, it is well known, was chosen to administer in sacred employments of an inferior kind. These three ranks appear to have been general through the Christian world in the former part of this century.

St. Paul, indeed, "would go to Jerusalem," though he knew he should be bound. But the certainty of death was not before his eyes, and therefore his resolution, in this case, is not similar to that of Ignatius. As for the rest, he took no pains to dissuade others from saving his life : he took pains to save it himself : he blames his friends at Rome for deserting him : and that eagerness for martyrdom which Ignatius expresses, I see neither in Paul nor in any of the apostles. They rather refer themselves calmly to the will of God in things which concern themselves. On the whole, there appears in Ignatius the same zeal for God and love to Jesus Christ, and the same holy contempt of earthly things, which was so eminent in the apostles : but, I suspect, not an equal degree of calm resignation to the divine will.

The time which he was allowed to spend at Smyrna, in company with his beloved Polycarp and other friends, must have been highly agreeable to him. But his keepers were impatient of their long stay : the reasons were, most probably, of a maritime nature. The season, however, for the public spectacles at Rome was advancing, and, perhaps they were afraid of not arriving in time. They now set

sail for Troas, where, on his arrival, he was refreshed with the news of the persecution ceasing in the church of Antioch. He had been attended hither by Burrhus, the deacon of Polycarp; and him he dispatched with an epistle to the Philadelphians, by way of return for the visit which their bishop had paid him at Troas. For here also several churches sent their messengers to visit and to salute him; and Providence so far restrained the inhumanity of his guards, that he was allowed to have intercourse with them.—He wrote three epistles more at this place.

The Philadelphians, from his account, were still favoured with the same spirit of grace, by which they had been already so honourably distinguished among the seven churches of Asia. He recommends, as usual, unity, concord, obedience;—not that he had found any thing amiss in them in these respects.

One may form some idea of the manner in which these primitive Christians enjoyed the grace of God, and admired and loved it, as it appeared in one another, by his way of speaking of the Philadelphian bishop, whose name is not given to us. ‘whom,’ says he, ‘I know to have obtained the ministry, not by any selfish or worldly means or motives, but for the common good of saints; not through vain glory, but from the love of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am perfectly charmed with his meekness: even when silent he exhibits more power than vain speakers.’

He recommends to them to preserve a unity in the administration of the Lord's Supper: ‘For there is one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the unity of his blood; one altar, as also one bishop, with the presbytery and the deacons my fellow-servants. Whatever ye do, do all according to the will of God.’

The firmness of Christian faith, and his zeal

against the spirit of self-righteousness, are observable in the following passage:—‘ If any interpret Judaism to you, hear him not. For it is better to hear the gospel from a circumcised person, than Judaism from an uncircumcised one. But if both speak not of Jesus Christ, they are to me pillars and sepulchres of the dead, on which are written only the names of men. The objects dear to me are Jesus Christ, his cross, his death, his resurrection, and the faith which is in him ; by which I desire, through your prayer, to be justified.’ He begs them to send a deacon to Antioch, to congratulate his people on the cessation of persecution. Toward the conclusion he speaks of Philo, the deacon from Cilicia, who ministered to him, together with Agathopes, a choice saint, who, renouncing the world, had followed him from Syria.

He wrote also from Troas to the Smyrneans, and his commendations of them are consonant to the character they bear in the book of the Revelation. They had weathered the storm of persecution, which was there predicted, and had probably enjoyed the ministry of Polycarp from St. John’s time. The most striking thing in this epistle, is the zeal with which he warns them against the Docetæ. In his view, the evil of their heresy consisted in taking away the atoning blood of Christ, and the hope of a blessed resurrection :—let modern divines hear him, and be instructed. ‘ I glorify Jesus Christ our God, who hath given you wisdom. For I understand that ye are perfect in the immoveable faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, who really was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and born of a virgin really ;—who really suffered under Pontius Pilate.—For these things he suffered for us, that we might be saved. And he truly suffered ; as also he truly raised up himself : not as some infidels say, that he seemed to suffer.—I forewarn you of those beasts who are in the shape of men ; whom you ought not only not to

receive, but, if possible, not even to meet with. Only you ought to pray for them—if they may be converted,—which is a difficult case.—But Jesus Christ, our true life, has power to save to the uttermost.'—A humble and thankful sense of the unspeakable value of Christ, leads naturally to this charity, and the want of it leaves men always, under the appearance of candour, to a cruel insensibility of heart and an undistinguishing scepticism. It seems that these heretics, with the usual artifices of such persons, laboured to work themselves into the good graces of Ignatius. He sees through their designs, and says,—'for what does it profit me, if any man commend me, and yet blaspheme my Lord, denying him to have come in the flesh?—They separate from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the body of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins.—They who contradict the gift of God, die in their reasonings.'—Union with the bishop he strenuously insists on. 'It is not lawful without the bishop to baptize, or to make a love feast.'

We see the practice of true Christians in those times. They carefully separated themselves from heretics: they beheld their views with horror: they adhered closely to Christ.—His Godhead, manhood, atonement, priesthood, were inestimably precious in their eyes. They could not allow those to be Christians at all who denied the fundamentals: in fine, they preserved order and close connexion with their pastors: they did nothing in religion without them. These were the means of protecting truth among them: and the long course of evangelical prosperity in these churches, under God, may be ascribed to the use of these means.

One letter only remains to be mentioned,—that to Polycarp. It contains a just picture of pastoral integrity, wisdom, and charity: the whole of it deserves to be studied by all ministers. The more holy

any pastor is, the more will he be sensible of the need of divine wisdom and strength.—The disadvantages in which a poor sinful worm is involved, who has to contend against the united powers of the world and the devil, against the corrupt workings of his own nature, the open opposition of the profane, and the faults of God's own people, cannot even be conceived by a mere secular clergy, intent only on ease and preferment, or, at best, on literary indulgences and external decorum: as little will they be conceived by those ambitious and turbulent teachers, who are so swallowed up in political dreams, as to forget that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

From Troas, Ignatius, being brought to Neapolis, passed by Philippi through Macedonia, and that part of Epirus which is next to Epidamnus. Having found a ship in one of the sea-ports, his conductors sailed over the Adriatic: and thence, entering into the Tuscan sea, and passing by several islands and cities, at length they came in view of Puteoli, which being shown to him, he hastened to go forth, desirous to tread in the steps of the apostle Paul: but a violent wind arising would not permit him to accomplish this design. His attendants, the relaters of the martyrdom, say, that the wind then became favourable for one day and night;—and that they were hurried on contrary to their wishes: THEY sorrowing at the thought of being separated from him: but HE rejoicing in the prospect of soon leaving the world and departing to his Lord, whom he loved. They sailed into the Roman port Ostia; and when the impure sports were at an end, the soldiers began to be offended with his slowness; but the bishop joyfully complied with their hastiness. Ostia was some miles from Rome; and he was met by the Roman Christians, who intimated their strong desire for his preservation. Some of them probably had influence with the great; and they were willing to

exert it : Ignatius, however, was inflexible. He was brought to Rome, and presented to the prefect of the city.

When he was led to execution, he was attended by a number of the brethren, and was allowed to join in prayer with them. And he prayed to the Son of God in behalf of the churches,—that he would put a stop to the persecution, and continue the love of the brethren toward each other. He was then led into the amphitheatre, and was speedily thrown to the wild beasts. He had here also his wish : the beasts were his grave : a few bones only were left, which the deacons gathered, carefully preserved, and afterwards buried at Antioch.

The writers thus conclude : ‘ We have made known to you both the day and the time of his martyrdom, —that being assembled together according to that time, we may jointly commemorate the magnanimous martyr of Christ, who trode under foot the devil, and completed the course which he had devoutly wished, in Christ Jesus our Lord, by whom and with whom all glory and power be to the Father with the blessed Spirit for ever. Amen.’

Usher has preserved, or rather restored to us also an epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians. It breathes the same spirit as those of his fellow-disciple, but has less pathos and vigour of sentiment. Citations from it will be needless. He begs the Philippians to communicate to him what they knew of Ignatius, whom they had seen at Philippi, after his departure from Smyrna. We hence see how the churches then formed one large fraternity, abstracted from partial views of supporting little factions and interests. He exhorts them to obey the word of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, which they had seen exemplified in Ignatius, and in others among themselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles : for these loved not this present world, but him, who died and was raised again by

God for us. By his account it appears that the Philippians still retained the Christian spirit. One of the Presbyters, Valens, together with his wife, had sinned through covetousness. Would to God such spots in the pastoral character were as singular in our times! Polycarp beautifully expresses his charitable concern for them, and exhorts them, in affectionate sympathy, to endeavour to restore their spiritual health.

These facts and observations throw some light on the persecution of Trajan, on the spirit of Christians so far as it can be collected at that time, on the martyrdom of Ignatius, and on the signal glory which God was pleased to diffuse around it among the churches.

II.—THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE REIGNS OF ADRIAN AND ANTONINUS PIUS.

TRAJAN died in the year 117. The latter part of his reign had been employed in his great military expedition into the East, whence he lived not to return. His exploits and triumphs fall not within my province:—I have no concern with him except in that line, in which to a Christian he must appear to the greatest disadvantage; and out of which, it were heartily to be wished, that he had ever given any evidence of a desire to remove. His successor, Adrian, appears not to have issued any persecuting edicts. But the iniquity of his predecessor survived; and Adrian's silent acquiescence for a time, gave it sufficient scope to exert itself in acts of barbarity.

In the mean time the gospel spread more and more. A number of apostolical persons demonstrated by their conduct, that the Spirit, which had influenced the apostles, rested upon them. Filled with divine charity, they distributed their substance to the poor, and travelled into regions which as yet, had not heard the sound of the gospel: and having planted the faith, they ordained pastors,

committed to them the culture of the new ground, and then passed into other countries. Hence numbers, through grace, embraced the doctrine of salvation, at the first hearing, with much alacrity. It is natural to admire here the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the production of so pure and charitable a temper; to contrast it with the illiberal selfishness too prevalent even among the best in our days; and to regret how little is done for the propagation of the gospel through the world, by nations whose aids of commerce and navigation are so much superior to those enjoyed by the ancients.—One advantage those Christians possessed, indeed, which we have not: they were all one body, one church, of one name, and cordially loved one another as brethren: the attention to fundamentals, to real Christianity, was not dissipated by schismatic peculiarities, nor was the body of Christ rent in pieces by factions; there were indeed many heretics; but real Christians admitted them not into their communities; the line of distinction was drawn with sufficient precision; and a dislike of the person or offices of Christ, and of the real spirit of holiness, discriminated the heretics: and separation from them, while it was undoubtedly the best mark of charity to their souls, tended to preserve the faith and love of true Christians in genuine purity.

Among these holy men Quadratus was much distinguished. He succeeded Publius in the bishopric of Athens, who had suffered martyrdom either in this or the foregoing reign. He found the flock in a dispersed and confused state: their public assemblies were deserted: their zeal was grown cold and languid: their lives and manners were corrupted; and they seemed likely to apostatize from Christianity. Quadratus laboured to recover them, with much zeal and with equal success. Order and discipline were restored, and with them the holy flame of godliness. One of the strongest testimonies

of these things, is the account which the famous Origen, in the second book of his treatise against Celsus, gives of the Athenian church. While this great man is demonstrating the admirable efficacy of Christian faith on the minds of men, he exemplifies his positions by this very church of Athens, on account of its good order, constancy, meekness, and quietness:—he represents it as infinitely superior, in these respects, to the common political assembly in that city, which was factious and tumultuary. He affirms that it was evident, that the worst parts of the church were better than the best of their popular assemblies. This is a very pleasing testimony to the growth of Christianity, since the time when a handful of seed was sown there by St. Paul: and the testimony of so penetrating and sagacious an observer as Origen may be considered as one of the many proofs that might be given of the happy effect which real Christianity has on human society. To a mind not intoxicated with vain ideas of secular glory, the Christian part of Athens must appear infinitely more happy and more respectable, than that commonwealth ever had been in the meridian of its glory. But we hope in future pages to give much stronger proofs of the advantages derived to society from the gospel.

In the sixth year of his reign, Adrian came to Athens, and was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. This prince was remarkably fond of Pagan institutions; and by this very circumstance demonstrated a spirit entirely foreign to Christianity. The persecutors were proceeding with sanguinary vigour, when Quadratus at length presented an apology to the emperor, in which he defended the gospel from the calumnies of its enemies; and in which he particularly took notice of our Saviour's miracles, his curing of diseases, and raising of the dead,—some instances of which, he says, namely, of persons raised from the dead, were alive in his time.

Aristides, a Christian writer at that time in Athens, addressed himself also to Adrian in an apology on the same subject. The good sense of the emperor at length was roused to do justice to his innocent subjects. The apologies of the two writers may be reasonably supposed to have had some effect on his mind. Yet a letter from Serenius Gracianus, proconsul of Asia, may be conceived to have moved him still more. He wrote to the emperor, 'that it seemed to him unreasonable that the Christians should be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without any crime proved against them.' This seems the first instance of any Roman governor daring publicly to suggest ideas contradictory to Trajan's iniquitous maxims, which inflicted death on Christians as such, abstracted from any moral guilt. And it seems to me a sufficient proof, that the severe sufferings of Christians at this period, which appear to have been very remarkable in Asia, were more owing to the active and sanguinary spirit of persecution itself,—which, from Trajan's example, was become very fashionable,—than to any explicit regard to his edicts. We have Adrian's rescript, addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the successor of Gracianus, whose government seems to have been near to its conclusion when he wrote to the emperor.

To Minucius Fundanus.

'I have received a letter written to me by the very illustrious Serenius Gracianus, whom you have succeeded.—To me, then, the affair seems by no means fit to be slightly passed over, that men may not be disturbed without cause, and that sycophants may not be encouraged in their odious practices. If the people of the province will appear publicly, and make open charges against the Christians, so as to give them an opportunity of answering for themselves, let them proceed in that manner only, and not by rude de-

mands and mere clamours. For it is much more proper, if any person will accuse them, that you should take cognizance of these matters. If any then accuse, and show that they actually break the laws, do you determine according to the nature of their crime. But, by Hercules, if the charge be a mere calumny, do you estimate the enormity of such calumny, and punish it as it deserves.'

Notwithstanding the obscurity which I find Dr. Jortin and Dr. Lardner suppose to be in this rescript, I cannot but think it clearly shows that it was the intention of the emperor to prevent Christians from being punished as such. The only reason for hesitation which I can see, is the inconsistency of it with Trajan's rescript. But it does not appear that Adrian intended the conduct of his predecessor to be the model of his own: and we shall see, in the next reign, still clearer proofs of the equity of Adrian's views. It is but justice due to this emperor, to free his character from the charge of persecution; and Christians of that or of any age could not object to the propriety of being punished equally with other men, if they violated the laws of the state. But it is the glory of the times we are now reviewing, that no men were more innocent, peaceable, and well-disposed citizens than the Christians. Yet the enmity of men's minds against real godliness,—so natural in all ages,—laid them under extreme disadvantages unknown to others, in vindicating themselves from unjust aspersions: and this forms, indeed, one of the most painful crosses which good men must endure in this life. For example, many heretics, who wore the name of Christians, were guilty of the most detestable enormities: these were indiscriminately charged by the Pagans on Christians in general. This circumstance, in addition to other still more important reasons, rendered them careful in preserving the line of separation distinct: and, by the excellence of their doctrine, and the

purity of their lives, they were enabled gradually to overcome all uncandid insinuations.

There is extant, also, a letter of Adrian, in which he speaks of Christian bishops in as respectable a manner as of the priests of Serapis; and of Christians in general as very numerous at Alexandria. Since St. Mark's time, therefore, it is evident, though we have scarcely any particular accounts, that the gospel must have flourished abundantly in Egypt.

But the same equitable rule of government which forbade Adrian to punish the innocent Christians, led him to be very severe against the guilty Jews: for now appeared Barchochebas, who pretended to be the star prophesied of by Balaam. This miserable people, who had rejected the true Christ, received the impostor with open arms; and were by him led into horrid crimes; and amongst the rest into a cruel treatment of the Christians. The issue of the rebellion was the entire exclusion of the Jews from the city and territory of Jerusalem. Another city was erected in its stead, and called, after the emperor's name, *Ælia*. This leads us to consider how the state of the mother-church of Jerusalem was affected by this great revolution. The Christian Jews, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as it has been observed, had retired to Pella, a little town beyond Jordan, inhabited by Gentiles. The unexpected retreat of Cestius had given them this opportunity of effecting their escape. How long they continued there, is uncertain. They must, however, have returned before Adrian's time, who, coming to Jerusalem forty-seven years after the devastation, found there a few houses and a little church of Christians, built on Mount Sion. Here the church of Jerusalem kept their solemn assemblies, and seemed to have acquired a splendid accession by the conversion of Aquila, the emperor's kinsman, whom he made governor and overseer of

the new city. But as he continued to pursue his magical and astrological studies, he was excluded from the church. A strong proof that the mother-church still retained a measure of its pristine purity and discipline! Corrupt churches are glad to retain persons of eminence in their communion, however void of the spirit of the gospel. Aquila, incensed, apostatized to Judaism, and translated the Old Testament into Greek.

Eusebius, (b. iv. c. 5,) gives us a list of the bishops who successively presided in Jerusalem. The first was the Apostle James, the second Simeon; both whose histories have been recorded. He mentions thirteen more: but we have no account of their characters or actions. During all this time something judaical seems to have continued in their practice; though Jewish ideas would naturally decay by degrees. The revolution under Adrian at length put a total end to the Jewish church, by the extirpation and banishment of this people. To such outward changes is the church of Christ subject: a new church, however, arose in *Ælia*, among the Gentiles, whose bishop was named Mark.

Adrian, after a reign of twenty-one years, was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, who appears to have been, at least in his own personal character and intentions, always guiltless of Christian blood. It was now very difficult for the enemies of Christ to support their persecuting spirit with any tolerably specious pretensions: the abominations of heretics, whom ignorance and malice will ever confound with real Christians, furnished them with some: probably these were much exaggerated; but, whatever they were, the whole Christian name was accused of them. They were charged with incest, and the devouring of infants; and thus a handle was afforded for the barbarous treatment of the best of mankind; till time detected the slanders, and men became at length ashamed of affecting to believe what was in

its own nature improbable, and was supported by no evidence. It pleased God, at this time, to endow some Christians with the power of defending his truth by the manly arms of rational argumentation: Justin Martyr presented his first Apology to the emperor Antoninus Pius, about the third year of his reign, A. D. 140. He was of that class of men, who, in those days, were usually called philosophers. His conversion to Christianity, his views and spirit, his labours and sufferings, will deserve to be considered in a distinct chapter. Suffice it here to say, that the information and arguments which his first Apology contained, were not used in vain. Antoninus was a man of sense and humanity. Open to conviction, uncorrupted by the vain and chimerical philosophy of the times, he was desirous of doing justice to all mankind. Asia propria was still the scene of vital Christianity, and of cruel persecution. Thence the Christians applied to Antoninus; and complained of the many injuries which they sustained from the people of the country. Earthquakes, it seems, had lately happened; and the Pagans were much terrified, and ascribed them to the vengeance of heaven against the Christians. We have, both in Eusebius and at the end of Justin's first Apology, the edict sent to the common council of Asia; every line of which deserves attention.

The Emperor, to the Common Council of Asia.

'I am quite of opinion, that the gods will take care to discover such persons. For it much more concerns them to punish those who refuse to worship them, than you, if they be able. But you harass and vex the Christians, and accuse them of Atheism and other crimes, which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes which have

happened in past times, or lately, is it not proper to remind you of your own despondency, when they happen; and to desire you to compare your spirit with theirs, and observe how serenely they confide in God? In such seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and to neglect their worship: you live in the practical ignorance of the supreme God himself, and you harass and persecute to death those who do worship him. Concerning these same men, some others of the provincial governors wrote to our divine father Adrian, to whom he returned answer,—‘That they should not be molested, unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government.’ Many also have signified to me concerning these men, to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any person will still persist in accusing the Christians merely as such,—Let the accused be acquitted, though he appear to be a Christian;—and let the accuser be punished.’—Set up at Ephesus in the common assembly of Asia.

Eusebius informs us, that this was no empty edict, but was really put in execution. Nor did this emperor content himself with one edict. He wrote to the same purport to the Larisseans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and all the Greeks.

As this prince reigned twenty-three years, such vigorous measures must, after some time at least, have had their effect. And we may fairly conclude that during a great part of this reign the Christians were permitted to worship God in peace.

III.—JUSTIN MARTYR.

THIS great man was born at Neapolis in Samaria, anciently called Sichem. His father was a Gentile,—probably one of the Greeks, belonging to the colony transplanted thither: he gave his son a philosophical education.—Justin in his youth travelled

for the improvement of his understanding; and Alexandria afforded him all the entertainment which an inquisitive mind could derive from the fashionable studies. The Stoics appeared to him at first the masters of happiness. He gave himself up to one of this sect, till he found he could learn from him nothing of the nature of God. It is remarkable—as he tells us himself,—that his tutor informed him,—this was a knowledge by no means necessary; which fact very much illustrates the views of Dr. Warburton, concerning these ancient philosophers: namely, that they were Atheists in reality. He next betook himself to a Peripatetic, whose anxious desire of settling the price of his instructions, convinced Justin that truth did not dwell with him. A Pythagorean next engaged his attention, who, requiring of him the previous knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry, dismissed him for the present, when he understood that he was unfurnished with those sciences. In much solicitude he applied himself to a Platonic philosopher; and with a more plausible appearance of success from this teacher than from any of the foregoing. He now gave himself to retirement. ‘As I was walking,’ says Justin, ‘near the sea, I was met by an aged person of a venerable appearance, whom I beheld with much attention. We soon entered into conversation; and upon my professing a love for private meditation, the venerable old man hinted at the absurdity of mere speculation, abstracted from practice: this,’ continues Justin, ‘gave occasion to me to express my ardent desire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The stranger, by degrees, endeavoured to cure me of my unmeaning admiration of Plato and Pythagoras: he pointed out the writings of the Hebrew prophets as much more ancient than any of those called philosophers; and he led me to some view of the nature and of the evidences of *Christianity*: he added, ‘above all things, pray that

the gates of light may be opened to you ; for they are not discernible, nor to be understood by any one, except God and his Christ enable a man to understand.' He said many other things to the same effect. He then directed me to follow his advice, and he left me. I saw him no more ; but—immediately a fire was kindled in my soul, and I had a strong affection for the prophets, and for those men who are the friends of Christ: I weighed within myself the arguments of the aged stranger ; and, in the end, I found the divine scriptures to be the only sure philosophy.'—We have no more particulars of the exercises of his mind in religion.—His conversion took place from this beginning, sometime in the reign of Adrian. But he has shown us enough to make it evident, that conversion was then looked upon as an inward spiritual work in the soul,—the same work of grace which the Spirit operates at this day on real Christians. There appear, in his case, an earnest thoughtfulness, attended with a strong desire to know God, and also an experimental sense of his own ignorance, and of the insufficiency of human resources. Then there appear further,—the providential care of God in bringing him under the means of Christian instruction,—a direction to his soul to pray for spiritual illumination,—the divine hunger created in his heart,—and, in due time, the satisfactory comforts and privileges of real Christianity ; which, with him, was not mere words and declarations ; for he says, He found Christianity to have a formidable majesty in its nature, adapted to terrify those who are in the way of transgression, as well as a sweetness, peace, and serenity for those who are conversant in it. He owns, in another of his works, that the example of Christians suffering death so serenely for their faith, moved his mind not a little. This is an obvious consideration, and needs not be insisted on, however worthy it may be the notice of those called philosophers in any age.—

Justin, after his conversion, still wore the usual philosophic garb, which demonstrates that he retained, perhaps, too great an affection for the studies of his youth: and if I mistake not, he always preserved a very strong tincture of the spirit of philosophy, though not in such a manner as to prevent his sincere attachment to the gospel.

Coming to Rome in the time of Antoninus Pius, he there wrote a confutation of the heretics: particularly of Marcion, the son of a bishop born in Pontus; who, for lewdness, was ejected from the church and had fled to Rome, where he broached errors of an Antinomian tendency. It makes no part of my plan to define the systems of heretics; but only to speak of them as they come in my way, with a special reference to the opposition, which they made to the fundamentals of the gospel. That holiness, “without which no man shall see the Lord,” and which it was the great design of Christ to promote, found in this pretended Christian a bitter enemy. Justin, who had tasted of the holy nature of the gospel in his own experience, withstood him both in conversation and by his writings. About the year 140, he published his excellent Apology for the Christians, addressed to Antoninus Pius, which may reasonably be supposed to have had a considerable influence on the emperor’s political conduct towards the Christians.

It appears from this performance, that it was common to accuse Christians merely *AS SUCH*; and to charge the faults of any persons who bore the name, on the whole body.—Thus there is no new thing under the sun.—The term Christian was matter of obloquy at that time: various other terms of scoff and contempt have been invented since; and it requires no great degree of rational power to show, as Justin has done completely, the absurdity and inconclusiveness of such methods of attacking religion, whether they be ancient or modern. He takes notice also of the *happy effects* which the conduct of Christians had

then on mankind. ‘We have many instances,’ says he, ‘to show the powerful effects of example among men. Many persons have been impressed in favour of the gospel, by observing the sobriety and temperance of their neighbours,—or the unparalleled meekness of their fellow-travellers under cruel treatment; or the uncommon integrity and equity of those with whom they transacted business.’ These are fresh proofs of the continuance of vital religion in the time of Justin:—a man calling himself a Christian, without any practical power of the religion, would scarcely have then been classed among the brethren. I find also fresh proofs, in this apology, of the strong line of distinction kept up in those days between Christians and heretics. The author observes that the latter were fond of the name of Christians, and yet were not persecuted. There was nothing in their spirit and conduct that provoked persecution. He takes notice also of the small number of Jewish converts in comparison of the main body of the nation. But this, he observes, was agreeable to the prophecies of the Old Testament. He describes likewise the customs of the primitive Christians in public worship, and in the administration of the sacraments, in order to show the falsehood of the charges generally urged against them.

Not long after his first Apology, Justin left Rome and went to Ephesus, where he had a discourse with Trypho the Jew; the substance of which he has given us in a dialogue. In this work he notices the common calumnies against Christians,—of their eating men,—of their extinguishing the lights,—and of their promiscuous sensuality; but treats these charges as not credited by men of sense even among their enemies; and therefore as not meriting a serious confutation.

On his return to Rome, he had frequent contests with Crescens the philosopher,—a man equally remarkable for malignity to Christians, and for the most horrid vices. Justin now presented his second Apo-

logy to M. Antoninus Philosophus, the successor of Pius, and a determined enemy to Christians. He had conceived hopes of softening his mind toward them, as he had done that of his predecessor,—but in vain. Marcus was their enemy during his whole reign; and they scarcely ever had an enemy more implacable. The immediate occasion of the second Apology, as he informs the emperor, was this:—

“ A certain woman at Rome had, together with her husband, lived in extreme profligacy and licentiousness. But on her conversion to Christianity, her own conduct being changed, she endeavoured to persuade her husband also to imitate her example, by representing to him the punishment of eternal fire, which in a future state would be inflicted on the disobedient. But he persisting in his wickedness, she was induced to wish for a separation. By the advice of her friends, she continued, however, to live with him, hoping that in process of time he might be brought to repentance. Upon his coming to Alexandria, he proceeded to greater lengths of wickedness, so that finding the connexion now no longer tolerable, she procured a divorce from him. He, not impressed with the happy change which had taken place in her dispositions, and unmoved with her compassionate attempts to rescue him from ruin, accused her of being a Christian. Upon which she presented a petition to YOU, O EMPEROR, that she might have time to dispose and regulate her household affairs: and she promised that after that was done, she would answer to the charge;—which petition you granted. The husband, finding his wife to have gained a respite from his malice, diverted it to another object,—to one Ptolemy, who had instructed her in Christianity, and who had been punished by Urbicius, the prefect of Rome. He persuaded a centurion, his friend, to imprison Ptolemy; and to ask him whether he was a Christian. He, no flatterer, or dissembler, ingenuously confessed, and was a long time punished with

imprisonment. At last, when he was brought before Urbicius, and was asked only this question, Whether he was a Christian, he confessed himself a teacher of the divine truth. For no true Christian can act otherwise. Urbicius, nevertheless ordered him to be led to execution. Upon this, a Christian, named Lucius, expostulated with him on the absurdity of these proceedings, on the iniquity of putting men to death merely for a name, abstracted from any one specific charge of guilt; a conduct unworthy of emperors such as Pius the last, or Philosophus the present, or of the sacred senate. 'You too appear to me to be of the same sect,' was all that the prefect deigned to reply. Lucius confessed that he was; and was himself led also to execution, which he bore with triumphant serenity, declaring that he was now going from unrighteous governors to God his gracious Father and King. A third person was sentenced also to death on the same occasion. And I also,' continues Justin, 'expect by persons of this sort to be murdered, perhaps by Crescens the pretended philosopher. For he deserves not the name of a philosopher, who, with a view of pleasing many deceived persons, publicly accuses Christians of Atheism and impiety, though he himself be totally ignorant of their real character. I, Justin, have interrogated him, and proved that he is quite unacquainted with the subject. I am willing to undergo an examination before you in company with him. And my questions and his answers will make it evident to yourself, that he knows nothing of our affairs; or, at least, conceals what he does know.'

But Marcus was not a man disposed to exercise common justice towards Christians. The philosophic garb was no shield to Justin, even in the eyes of an emperor, who piqued himself on the surname of philosopher. The sincerity of his Christian attachments outweighed every argument and every plausible appearance in his favour. Crescens procured him im-

prisonment for the crime of being a Christian,—the greatest evil of which a human being could be guilty in the eyes of this emperor. The acts of his martyrdom, which carry more marks of truth than many other martyrologies, give the following account: ‘He and six of his companions having been apprehended, were brought before Rusticus the prefect,—who, I suppose, had succeeded Urbicius,—a person of considerable eminence, and famous for his attachment to Stoicism. He had been tutor to the emperor, who acknowledges, in the first book of his *Meditations*, his obligations to him on several accounts, and particularly for his teaching him to be of a placable and forgiving temper. This is one instance, among thousands, that it is possible for a man to be strongly impressed with many beautiful ideas of morality, and still to remain an inflexible enemy to the gospel. Rusticus undertook to persuade Justin to obey the gods, and to comply with the emperor’s edicts. The martyr defended the reasonableness of his religion. Upon which the governor inquired in what kind of learning and discipline he had been educated. He told him, that he had endeavoured to understand all kinds of discipline, and had tried all methods of learning, but finding satisfaction in none of them, he at last had found rest in the Christian doctrine, however fashionable it might be to despise it. Wretch! replies the indignant magistrate, art thou captivated then by THAT RELIGION? I am, says Justin; I follow the Christians, and their doctrine is right. ‘What is their doctrine?’ It is this; we believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things visible and invisible; and we confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God; foretold by the prophets of old; and that he is now the Saviour, Teacher, and Master of all those who are duly submissive to his instructions, and that he will hereafter be the Judge of mankind. As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite Deity: this was the basis

ness of the prophets, who, many ages ago, had foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world. 'Where do the Christians usually assemble?' The God of the Christians is not confined to any particular place. 'In what place do you instruct your scholars?' Justin mentioned the place in which he dwelt, and told him that there he explained Christianity to all who resorted to him. The prefect having severally examined his companions, again addressed Justin. 'Hear thou, who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in possession of truth. If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven?' Although I suffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true Christians; as I know that the divine grace and favour is laid up for all such, and shall be so, while the world endures. 'Do you think that you shall go to heaven, and receive a reward?' I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty which excludes all doubt.—Rusticus insisted that they should all go together, and sacrifice to the gods. No man, whose understanding is sound, replies Justin, will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety. 'Unless you comply, you will be tormented without mercy.' We desire nothing more sincerely than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be saved. Hence our happiness is promoted; and we shall have confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which, by the divine appointment, the whole world must appear.—The rest assented, and said, 'Despatch quickly your purpose, we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols. The governor then pronounced sentence,—'As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded, according to the laws.' The martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were whipped and afterwards beheaded. Their dead bodies were taken by Christian friends, and decently interred.

Thus, slept in Jesus the Christian philosopher Justin, about the year 163, and about the third or fourth year of the reign of Marcus. Like many of the ancient fathers, he appears to us under the greatest disadvantage. Works really his have been lost, and others have been ascribed to him, part of which are not his, and the rest, at least, of ambiguous authority. He is the first Christian since the apostles' days, who added to an unquestionable zeal and love of the gospel, the character of a man of learning and philosophy. His early habits were retained, and yet were consecrated to the service of God. This man, surely, should not be suspected of unreasonable impulses and fancies. His religion was the effect of serious and long deliberation; and the very best and most important use which a gentleman and a scholar can make of his rational faculties, namely, to determine his choice in religion, was made by Justin. He examined the various philosophic sects, not merely for the purpose of amusement or ostentation, but to find out God, and in God true happiness. He tried and found them all wanting; he sought him in the gospel, he found him there; he confessed him; he gave up every thing for him; he was satisfied with his choice, and he died in serenity. His persevering in the profession of philosophy might probably have another view besides the gratification of his own taste. He might hope to conciliate the affections of philosophers, and allure them to Christianity. The charity of his heart appears indeed to have been great. He prayed for all men; he declined no dangers for the good of souls; and he involved himself in disputes with philosophers for their benefit, to his own extreme hazard. His house was open for the instruction of all who consulted him: though he seems to have never assumed the ecclesiastical character. To draw gentlemen and persons of liberal education to pay attention to Christianity, appears to have been his chief employment. But he found it

easier to provoke opposition, and to throw away his own life, than to persuade a single philosopher to become a Christian. The danger of learned pride, the vanity of hoping to disarm the enmity of the wise of this world by the most charitable concessions, and the incurable prejudice of the great against the humble religion of Jesus, are much illustrated by his story. So is the victorious efficacy of divine grace, which singled out Justin from a race of men, of all men, of all others the most opposite to Christ. We have seen a philosopher persecuted to death, informed against by one of his brethren, condemned by another, and suffering by the authority of an emperor, who gloried more in the philosophic than in the imperial name. A man of his learning and sagacity should not rashly be supposed destitute of argument and system in his views. Men of sense will scarcely think the ideas of such a person unworthy of their regard. Let us see then briefly what were Justin's sentiments in religion. We may possibly be led to conclude that Christian principles may be seriously maintained in consistence with the love of science and letters, though perhaps we may observe some degree of adulteration which these principles received, by passing through a channel of all others the most unfavourable for the conducting of their course,—the channel of philosophy.

It is certain that Justin worshipped Christ as the true God in the full and proper sense of the words. We have seen one testimony of it already in his examination before Rusticus: but let the reader hear his own words. Trypho the Jew finds fault with the Christians on account of this very sentiment. 'To me it appears,' says he, 'a paradox incapable of any sound proof, to say, that this Christ was God before all time, and that then he was made man and suffered. And to assert that he was anything more than a man and of men, appears not only paradoxical but foolish.' 'I know,' answered Justin, 'that it appears

paradoxical, and particularly to those of your nation, who are determined neither to know nor do the will of God, but to follow the inventions of your teachers, as God declares of you. However, if I could not demonstrate that he existed before all time, being God the Son of the Maker of the universe, and that he was made man of the Virgin; yet, as this personage was shown by every sort of proof to be the Christ of God, be the question as it may respecting his divinity and humanity, you have no right to deny that he is the Christ of God, even if he were only man: you could only say, that I was mistaken in my idea of his character. For there are some who call themselves Christians, who confess him to be the Christ, but still maintain that he is mere man only, with whom I agree not; neither do most of those who bear that name agree with them; because we are commanded by Christ himself not to obey the precepts of men, but his own injunctions and those of the holy prophets.' 'Those,' says Trypho, 'who say he was a man only, and that he was in a particular manner anointed, and made Christ, appear to me to speak more rationally than you. For we all expect Christ a man, of men, and that Elias will come to anoint him.' The purport of this whole passage is plain. The general body of Christians in the second century held the proper deity of Jesus Christ. They believed that this was a part of Old Testament revelation, and they looked on a small number, who held his mere humanity, to be men who preferred human teachers to divine. They considered the Jews also the most implacable enemies of Christianity, as choosing to be directed rather by human teachers than by the divine oracles, and as inexorable in denying the divine mission of Christ, whatever opinion they might have formed of his person. Let the learned reader judge for himself, by turning to the passage in Justin, whether it will not bear the weight which I have laid upon it. The testimony

of a man so thoughtful, judicious, and honest as Justin, must be decisive, or nearly so; and therefore must, in a great measure, determine the question much agitated in our times relative to the opinion of the ancients concerning the person of Christ.

In another part of the same dialogue, he speaks of Christ as the God of Israel, who was with Moses, and explains his meaning when he said, that true Christians regarded what they were taught by the prophets. In his first apology he tells the emperor in what sense Christians were atheists. They did not worship the gods commonly so called, but they worshipped and adored the true God, and his Son, and the prophetic Spirit, honouring them in word and in truth. If those who call themselves Unitarians, were as candid and impartial as they profess, the controversy concerning the Trinity would be soon at an end. That the primitive Christians worshipped one God alone, all who espouse the doctrine of the Trinity will allow. Let the Unitarians with equal frankness acknowledge that they worshipped the one God in the three persons just now mentioned; and then we have the Trinity in Unity. Further; Justin uses two terms usually expressive of that worship and adoration, which incommunicably belongs to the deity. But, till there be a disposition in men, without disputation, to humble themselves before divine revelation, neither frankness in concession, nor unity of sentiment is to be expected.

The all-important doctrine of justification he states in the same manner as St. Paul does, believing that to press the necessity of Mosaic rites on others was to fall from the faith of Christ. The learned reader may see more at large his views of regeneration and forgiveness of all past sins through Christ Jesus, and how extremely different they were from the nominal Christianity which contents so many persons.

He appears to have had the clearest views of that

special illumination, without which no man will understand and relish real godliness. His first unknown instructor had taught him this, and he seems never to have forgotten it. He informs Trypho, that for their wickedness God had hidden from the Jews the power of knowing divine wisdom, except from a remnant, who according to the grace of his compassion were reserved, that their nation might not be like Sodom and Gomorrah. The eternal punishment of the wicked he avows so plainly, that I shall spare quotations upon that subject.

In fundamentals he was unquestionably sound. Yet there seems, however, something in his train of thinking which was the effect of his philosophic spirit, and which produced notions not altogether agreeable to the genius of the gospel. Thus toward the close of the second apology, he declares that the doctrines of Plato were not heterogeneous to those of Christ, but only not altogether similar. And he seems to assert that Plato and the Stoics, and the Pagan writers, in prose and verse, saw something of truth from the portion of the seed of the divine word, which he makes to be the same as the word, the only begotten Son of God. The reader who chooses to consult the last folio page of the apology may judge for himself, whether he does not there confound together two things perfectly distinct, the light of natural conscience which God has given to all men, and the light of divine grace peculiar to the children of God. Certain it is that St. Paul, who speaks of both, in the epistle to the Romans, always carefully distinguishes them as of a kind entirely different one from the other. He never allows unconverted men to have any portion at all of that light which is peculiarly Christian. But thus it was that this excellent man seems to have forgotten the guard, which can scarcely be too often repeated, against philosophy. We may see hereafter how mystics, and heretics, and platoning Christians jumbled these things together.

tirely, and what attempts were made by the philosophers to incorporate their doctrine of the *To εἶναι* with the gospel. Justin seems unwarily to have given them some handle for this ; and if I mistake not, he was the first sincere Christian who was seduced by human philosophy to adulterate the gospel, though in a small degree. It should ever be remembered that Christian light stands single and unmixed, and will not bear to be kneaded into the same mass with other systems, religious or philosophical. We may here mark the beginning of the decay of the first spiritual effusion among the Gentiles, through false wisdom, as long before ; namely, from the first council of Jerusalem, we noticed a similar decay in the Jewish church, through self-righteousness.

The same prejudice in favour of the instructor of his youth leads him to pay to Socrates a very great compliment, as if that extraordinary man had really known the true God, and had lost his life for attempting to draw men from idolatry. Whereas almost every line of the narrative left us by his disciples shows, that he was as much an idolater as the rest of his countrymen. The last words he uttered, it is well known, were entirely idolatrous. Justin had not learnt so fully as St. Paul would have taught him, that “ the world by wisdom knew not God.” In the last page of his *Trypho* there is also a phraseology extremely suspicious. He speaks of a self-determining power in man, and uses much the same kind of reasoning on the obscure object of free-will as has been fashionable with many since the days of Arminius. He seems to have been the first of all sincere Christians who introduced this foreign plant into Christian ground. I shall venture to call it foreign till its right to exist in the soil shall be proved from scriptural evidence. It is very plain that I do not mistake his meaning, because he never explicitly owns the doctrine of election, though with happy inconsistency, like many other real Christians, he

involved it in his experience, and implies it in various parts of his writings.

But the novelty once admitted was not easily expelled. The language of the church was silently and gradually changed, in this respect, from that more simple and scriptural mode of speaking used by Clement and Ignatius. Those primitive Christians knew the doctrine of the election of Grace, but not the self-determining power of the human will. We shall see hereafter the progress of evil, and its arrival at maturity under the fostering hand of Pelagius.

IV.—THE EMPEROR MARCUS ANTONINUS, AND HIS PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

HE succeeded Pius in the year 161, and appears very soon after to have commenced the persecution against the Christians, in which Justin and friends were slain. It excites a curiosity not foreign from the design of this history, to discover what could be the cause of so much enmity against a people confessedly harmless, in a prince so considerate, so humane, and in general, so well-intentioned as Marcus is allowed to have been. Besides, he acted in this respect directly contrary to the example of his predecessor, whose memory he doubtless much revered, from whose intelligent and investigating spirit he must have derived ample information concerning the Christians, and whom in all other matters of government he imitated so exactly. The fact, however, is certainly so. Marcus Antoninus was, during all his reign, which continued nineteen years, an implacable persecutor of Christians ; and this not from mere ignorance of their moral character. He knew them, yet hated them, and showed them no mercy. He allowed and encouraged the most barbarous treatment of their persons, and was yet himself a person of great humanity of temper, just and beneficent to the rest of mankind. He was free from

all reproach in his general conduct, and in several parts of it was a model worthy the imitation even of Christians.

I think it impossible to solve this phenomenon on any other principles than those by which the enmity of many philosophers of old, and of many devotees and exact moralists of modern times against the Christian religion, is to be explained. The gospel is in its own nature not only distinct from careless and dissolute vice, but also from the whole religion of philosophers. I mean of those philosophers who form to themselves a religion from natural and self-devised sources, either in opposition to the revealed word of God, or with the neglect both of that word and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is the great agent in applying the scriptures to the heart of man. In all ages it will be found that the more strenuously men support such religion, the more vehemently do they hate Christianity. Their religion is pride and self-importance. It denies the fallen state of man, the provision and efficacy of grace, and the glory of God and the Redeemer. The enmity hence occasioned is obvious. It must be considered also, that Marcus Antoninus was of the Stoical sect, who carried self-sufficiency to the utmost pitch.

He fancied that he carried God within him. Like most of the philosophers, he held the mystical doctrine of the *Τὸ ἔν*: but he held it in all its detestable impiety and arrogance. With him to be good and virtuous was the easiest thing in the world. It was only to follow nature and to obey the dictates of the deity, that is, of the human soul, which was divine and self-sufficient. With these views he could neither be humble, nor pray earnestly, nor feel his own internal wickedness and misery, nor endure the idea of a Saviour and Mediator. If, like his predecessor, Pius, he had been contented to be an ordinary person in religion, the humanity of his temper would probably have led him, as it did the emperor Pius,

to have respected the excellent character and virtues of Christians, and he would have felt it his duty to have protected such peaceable and deserving subjects. I say, probably, and I express myself with some reserve, because I much doubt whether he possessed an understanding equally sound with that of Antoninus Pius. But, be that as it may, the pride of philosophy appears to have been wounded and exasperated. Whoever has attended to the spirit which pervades his twelve Books of Meditations, and duly compared them with the doctrines of the gospel, must acknowledge a total opposition ; and then he will not wonder that Christians suffered from a serious Stoic, what might have been expected only from a flagitious Nero. Pride and licentiousness are equally condemned by the gospel, and they equally seek revenge. If this be a true state of the case, the philosophic spirit explained and stated as above, however differently modified in different ages, will always be inimical to the gospel, and the most decorous moralist belonging to the class of which we are now speaking, will be found in union, on this subject, with the basest characters. ‘Beware of philosophy,’ is a precept which as much calls for our attention now as ever.

If we attend to the notices of history on the education and manners of Marcus, the account which has been given of his enmity against the gospel will be amply confirmed. Adrian had introduced him among the Salian priests when eight years old, and he became accurately versed in the ritual of his priesthood. At twelve he began to wear the philosopher’s cloak : he practised austerities, he lay on the bare ground, and was with difficulty persuaded by his mother to use a mattress and slight coverlet. He placed in his private chapel gold statues of his deceased masters, and visited their sepulchral monuments, and there offered sacrifices and strewed flowers. So devoted was he to stoicism, that he attended the schools after he became emperor, and the faith which he put in

dreams sufficiently proves his superstitious credulity. From a man so much lifted up by self-sufficiency, bigotry, and superstition, an illiberal censure of the Christians is not matter of surprise. ‘This readiness,’ says he, ‘of being resigned to the prospect of death, ought to proceed from a propriety of deliberate judgment, not from mere unintelligent obstinacy, as is the case with the Christians: it should be founded on grounds of solid reason, and be attended with calm composure without any tragical raptures, and in such a way as may induce others to admire and imitate.’ If this emperor had ever attended, with any degree of candour and impartiality, to the dying scenes of Christians tortured to death by his orders, he might have seen all these circumstances exemplified. Thousands of them chose to suffer with deliberate judgment, preferred heavenly things to earthly, counted the cost, and made a reasonable decision, not doubtful, as the emperor was, concerning a future life, but calmly resigning this life in firm expectation of a better, and without any circumstances to justify the suspicion of pride or ostentation; on the contrary, they were adorned with meekness, cheerfulness, and charity. Hence thousands and ten thousands have been induced to examine what that hidden energy of Christian life must be, which produces such exalted sentiments and such grandeur of spirit. In fact the power of prejudice was never more strongly exhibited than in this malignant censure of Antoninus; which in truth is the more inexcusable, because he laboured under no involuntary ignorance of Christians. For besides the knowledge of them which he must have acquired under his predecessor, he had an opportunity of knowing them from various apologies published in his own reign. Justin’s second apology, as we have seen, was published during his reign: one sentence of which demonstrates in how striking a manner our Saviour’s prophecy was then fulfilled, ‘A man’s foes

shall be they of his own household!’ Everywhere, he observes, if a Gentile was reprovèd by a father or relation, he would revenge himself by informing against the reprover: in consequence of which he was liable to be dragged before the governor, and put to death. Tatian also, Athenagoras, Apollinaria, bishop of Hierapolis, and Theophilus of Antioch, and Melito of Sardis, published apologies. This last published his about the year 177, of which some valuable remains are preserved in Eusebius. A part of his address to Marcus deserves our attention, both on account of the justness of the sentiments, and the politeness with which they are delivered. ‘Pious persons, aggrieved by new edicts published throughout Asia, and never before practised, now suffer persecution. For audacious sycophants, and men who covet other persons goods, take advantage of these proclamations openly to rob and spoil the innocent by night and by day. If this be done through your order, let it stand good; for a just emperor cannot act unjustly, and we will cheerfully submit to the honour of such a death. This only we humbly crave of your majesty; that, after an impartial examination of us and of our accusers, you would justly decide whether we deserve death and punishment, or life and protection. But if these proceedings be not yours, and the new edicts be not the effects of your personal judgment, edicts which ought not to be enacted even against barbarian enemies, in that case we entreat you not to despise us, who are thus unjustly oppressed.’ He afterwards reminds him of the justice done to Christians by his two immediate predecessors.

From this account it is evident that Marcus, by new edicts, commenced the persecution, and that it was carried on with merciless barbarity in those Asiatic regions which had been relieved by Pius. There is nothing pleasant that can be suggested to us by this view of the cruel treatment of Christians.

and of the author of it, except one circumstance—that the effusion of the Spirit of God still continued to produce its holy fruits in those favoured regions.

In the two next chapters I propose to describe distinctly two scenes of this emperor's persecution ; and I shall now conclude this general account of him, with briefly mentioning the remarkable story of his danger and relief in the war of the Marcomanni. He and his army being hemmed in by the enemy, were ready to perish with thirst, when suddenly a storm of thunder and lightning affrighted the enemies, whilst the rain refreshed the Romans. It is evident that the victory was obtained by a remarkable providential interposition. The Christian soldiers in his army, we are sure, in their distress would pray to their God, even if Eusebius had not told us so. All Christian writers speak of the relief as vouchsafed in answer to their prayers, and no real Christian will doubt of the soundness of their judgment in this point. I have only to add, that Marcus, in a manner agreeable to his usual superstition, ascribed his deliverance to his gods. Each party judged according to their own views ; and those moderns who ascribe the whole to the ordinary powers of nature, or to accident, judge also according to THEIR usual profaneness or irreligious turn of thinking. Whether the Divine interposition deserves to be called a miracle or not, is a question rather concerning propriety of language than religion. This seems to me all that is needful to be said on a fact, which on one side has been magnified beyond all bounds ; and on the other has been reduced to mere insignificancy, It happened in the year 174. The emperor lived five years after this event, and as far as appears, continued a persecutor to the last.

V.—MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

IN or about the year 167, the sixth of Marcus,

Smyrna was distinguished by the martyrdom of her bishop, Polycarp.

We mentioned him before in the account of Ignatius. He had succeeded Bucolus, a vigilant and industrious bishop, in the charge of Smyrna. The apostles,—and we may suppose St. John particularly,—ordained him to this office. He had been familiarly conversant with the apostles, and received the government of the church from those who had been eye-witnesses and ministers of our Lord; and he continually taught that which he had been taught by them. Usher has laboured to show that he was the angel of the church of Smyrna addressed by our Saviour. If he be right in this, the character of Polycarp is indeed delineated by a hand divine; and the martyrdom before us was particularly predicted. By this account he must have presided seventy-four years over that church:—certainly, as we shall hereafter see, his age must have been extremely great; he long survived his friend Ignatius, and was reserved to suffer by Marcus Antoninus. Some time before that event, he came to Rome to hold a conference with Anicetus, the bishop of that see, concerning the time of observing Easter. The matter was soon decided between them, as all matters should be, which enter not into the essence of godliness. They each observed their own customs without any breach of charity between them, real or apparent. But Polycarp found more important employment while at Rome. The heresy of Marcion was strong in that city; and the testimony and zealous labour of one who had known so much of the apostles were successfully employed against it; and many were reclaimed. It was not in Marcion's power to undermine the authority of this venerable Asiatic. To procure a seeming coalition, was the utmost he could expect; and it was as suitable to his views to attempt this, as it was to those of Polycarp to oppose such duplicity and artifice. Meeting him one day in the

street, he called out to him, ‘Polycarp, own us.’ ‘I do own thee,’ says the zealous bishop, ‘to be the first-born of Satan.’ I refer the reader to what has been said already of St. John’s similar conduct on such occasions; and shall add only that Irenæus, from whom Eusebius relates the story, commends his conduct, and speaks of it as commonly practised by the apostles and their followers. Irenæus informs us, that he had a particular delight in recounting what had been told by those who had seen Christ in the flesh; that he used to relate also what he had heard concerning his doctrine and miracles; and when he was informed of any heretical attempts to overturn Christian fundamentals, he would cry out, ‘To what times, O God, hast thou reserved me!’ and would leave the place.

Indeed, when it is considered what Marcion maintained, and what unquestionable evidence Polycarp had against him in point of matter-of-fact, we shall see he had just reason to testify his disapprobation. This man was one of the Docetæ: according to him, Christ had no real human nature: he rejected the whole Old Testament, and mutilated the New. He held two principles, after the manner of the Manichees, in order to account for the origin of evil. If men, who assert things so fundamentally subversive of the gospel, would openly disavow the Christian name, they might be endured with much more composure by Christians; nor would there be any call for so scrupulous an absence from their society;—for St. Paul had so determined the case. But for such men, whether ancient or modern, to call themselves Christians, is an intolerable insult on the common sense of mankind.—We know nothing more of the life of this venerable bishop:—of the circumstances of his death we have an account, and they deserve a very particular relation.

The greatest part of the ancient narrative is preserved by Eusebius. The beginning and the end,

which he has not given us, have been restored by the care of Archbishop Usher. It is an epistle written in the name of Polycarp's church of Smyrna; I have ventured to translate the whole myself, yet not without examining what Valesius, the editor of Eusebius, and Archbishop Wake, have left us on the subject. It is doubtless one of the most precious ornaments of antiquity; and it seemed to deserve some notes and illustrations.

‘ The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to that which sojourns at Philomelium, and in all places where the Holy Catholic church sojourns throughout the world, may the mercy, peace, and love of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied! We have written to you, brethren, as well concerning the other martyrs, as particularly the blessed Polycarp; who, as it were, sealing by his testimony, closed the persecution. For all these things, which were done, were so conducted, that the Lord from above might exhibit to us the nature of a martyrdom perfectly evangelical. Polycarp did not precipitately give himself up to death, but waited till he was apprehended, as our Lord himself did, that we might imitate him; not caring only for ourselves, but also for our neighbours. It is the office of solid and genuine charity not to desire our own salvation only, but also that of all the brethren. Blessed and noble, indeed, are all martyrdoms which are regulated according to the will of God: for it behoves us, who assume to ourselves the character of Christians,—a name professing distinguished sanctity,—to submit to God alone the disposal of all events. Doubtless their magnanimity, their patience, their love of the Lord, deserve the admiration of every one; who, though torn with whips till the frame and structure of their bodies were laid open, even to their veins and arteries, yet meekly endured; so that those who stood around pitied them, and lamented. But such was their for-

itude, that no one of them uttered a sigh or groan. Thus they evinced to us all, that at that hour the martyrs of Christ, though tormented, were absent, as it were, from the body; or rather that the Lord, being present, conversed familiarly with them: thus they were supported by the grace of Christ; thus they despised the torments of this world, and by one hour redeemed themselves from eternal punishment. The fire of savage tormentors was cold to them: for they had steadily in view a desire to avoid that fire which is eternal, and never to be quenched. And with the eyes of their heart they had respect to the good things reserved for those who endure,—things —“which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” But these good things were then exhibited to them by the Lord. They were, indeed, then, no longer men, but angels. In like manner those, who were condemned to the wild beasts, underwent, for a time, cruel torments, being placed under shells of sea fish, and exposed to various other tortures, that, if possible, the infernal tyrant, by an uninterrupted series of suffering, might tempt them to deny their Master. Much did Satan contrive against them; but, thanks to God, without effect against them all. The magnanimous Germanicus, by his patience and courage, strengthened the weak: he fought with wild beasts in an illustrious manner; for when the proconsul besought him to pity his own old age, he irritated the wild beasts by provocation, and was desirous of departing more quickly from a world of wickedness. —And now the whole multitude, astonished at the fortitude of Christians, that is, of the true friends and worshippers of God, cried out, ‘Take away the atheists, let Polycarp be sought for.’ One Christian, by name Quintus, lately come from Phrygia, his native country, on sight of the beasts, trembled. He had persuaded some persons to present themselves before the tribunal of their own accord. Him the

proconsul, by soothing speeches, induced to swear and to sacrifice. On this account, brethren, we do not approve of those who offer themselves to martyrdom;—‘for we have not so learned Christ.’

‘The admirable Polycarp, when he heard what passed, was quite unmoved, and resolved to remain in the city. But, induced by the entreaties of his people, he retired to a village at no great distance; and there, with a few friends, he spent his time entirely, day and night, in praying, according to his usual custom, for all the churches in the world.—Three days before he was seized, he had a vision while he was praying: he saw his pillow consumed by fire; and turning to the company, he said prophetically, ‘I must be burnt alive.’ Upon hearing that the persons in search of him were just at hand, he retired to another village: immediately the officers came to his house; and not finding him, they seized two servants, one of whom was induced, by torture, to confess the place of his retreat. Certainly it was impossible to conceal him, since even those of his own household discovered him. And the tetrarch, called Cleronomus Herod, hastened to introduce him into the stadium; that so he might obtain his lot as a follower of Christ, and that those who betrayed him might share with Judas. Taking then the servant as their guide, they went out about supper-time, with their usual arms, as against a robber; and arriving late, they found him lying in an upper room, at the end of the house, whence he might have made his escape, but he would not, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done.’ Hearing that they were arrived, he came down and conversed with them; and all who were present admired his age and constancy: some said, ‘Is it worth while to take pains to apprehend so aged a person?’ He immediately ordered meat and drink to be set before them, as much as they pleased, and begged them to allow him an hour to pray without molestation; which being granted, he prayed

standing, and was so full of the grace of God, that he could not cease from speaking for two hours: the hearers were astonished; and many of them repented that they were come to seize so divine a character.

‘When he had finished his prayers, having made mention of all whom he had ever known, small and great, noble and vulgar, and of the whole Catholic church throughout the world, the hour of departing being come, they set him on an ass, and led him to the city. The irenarch Herod, and his father Nicetes, met him, who, taking him up into their chariot, began to advise him, asking, ‘What harm is it to say, Lord Cæsar! and to sacrifice, and be safe?’ At first he was silent, but being pressed, he said, ‘I will not follow your advice.’ When they could not persuade him, they treated him abusively, and thrust him out of the chariot, so that in falling he bruised his thigh. But he, still unmoved, as if he had suffered nothing, went on cheerfully under the conduct of his guards to the stadium. There the tumult being so great that few could hear any thing, a voice from heaven said to Polycarp, as he entered on the stadium, ‘Be strong, Polycarp, and behave yourself like a man.’ None saw the speaker, but many of us heard the voice.’

‘When he was brought to the tribunal, there was a great tumult, as soon as it was generally understood that Polycarp was apprehended. The proconsul asked him, if he was Polycarp; to which he assented. The former then began to exhort him: ‘Have pity on thy own great age—and the like. Swear by the fortune of Cæsar—repent—say, Take away the atheists.’ Polycarp, with a grave aspect, beholding all the multitude, waving his hand to them, and looking up to heaven, said, ‘Take away the atheists.’ The proconsul urging him, and saying, ‘Swear, and I will release thee,—reproach Christ;’ Polycarp said, ‘Eighty-and-six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me, and how can I blaspheme my

King who hath saved me?' The proconsul still urging, 'Swear by the fortune of Cæsar,' Polycarp said, 'If you still vainly contend to make me swear by the fortune of Cæsar, as you speak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am: I am a Christian; and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and hear.' The proconsul said, 'Persuade the people.' Polycarp said, 'I have thought proper to address you; for we are taught to pay to magistracies and powers appointed by God, all honour, which is consistent with a good conscience. But I do not hold them worthy that I should apologize before them.' 'I have wild beasts,' says the proconsul: 'I will expose you to them, unless you repent.' 'Call them,' replies the martyr. 'Our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worse: but it is a good thing to be changed from evil to good.' 'I will tame your spirit by fire,' says the other, 'since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent.' 'You threaten me with fire,' answers Polycarp, 'which burns for a moment, and will soon be extinct; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you please.' Saying this and more, he was filled with confidence and joy, and grace shone in his countenance; so that he was far from being confounded by these menaces: on the contrary the proconsul was visibly embarrassed: he sent, however, the herald to proclaim thrice, in the midst of the assembly, 'Polycarp hath professed himself a Christian.' Upon this all the multitude, both of Gentiles and of Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, with insatiate rage shouted aloud, 'This is the doctor of Asia, the father of Christians, the subverter of our gods, who hath taught many not to sacrifice nor to adore.' They now begged Philip, the asiarch, to let out a lion against Polycarp. But he refused, observing, that the amphitheatrical spec-

tacles of the wild beasts were finished. They then unanimously shouted, that he should be burnt alive; for his vision was of necessity to be accomplished. Whilst he was praying, he observed the fire kindling, and, turning to the faithful that were with him, he said prophetically, 'I must be burnt alive.' The business was executed with all possible speed; for the people immediately gathered fuel from the workshops and baths, in which employment the Jews distinguished themselves with their usual malice. As soon as the fire was prepared, stripping off his clothes, and loosing his girdle, he attempted to take off his shoes,—a thing unusual for him to do formerly,—because each of the faithful were wont to strive who should be most assiduous in serving him. For, before his martyrdom, his integrity and blameless conduct had always procured him the most unfeigned respect. Immediately the usual appendages of burning were placed about him. And when they were going to fasten him to the stake, he said, 'Let me remain as I am; for He who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain unmoved in the fire.' Upon which they bound him without nailing him. And he, putting his hands behind him, and being bound as a distinguished ram, selected from a great flock, a burnt-offering acceptable to God Almighty, said, 'O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have attained the knowledge of thee, O God of angels and principalities, and of all creation, and of all the just who live in thy sight, I bless thee, that thou hast counted me worthy of this day, and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost; among whom may I be received before thee this day as a sacrifice well-savoured and acceptable, which thou, the faithful and true God, hast prepared, promised

beforehand, and fulfilled accordingly. Wherefore I praise thee for all those things, I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son: through whom, with him in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee, both now and for ever. Amen.

And when he had pronounced Amen aloud, and finished his prayer, the officers lighted the fire: and a great flame burst out. We, to whom it was given to see, and who also were reserved to relate to others that which happened, saw a wonder: for the flame, forming the appearance of an arch, as the sail of a vessel filled with wind, was as a wall round about the body of the martyr; which was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refined in the furnace. We received also in our nostrils such a fragrance as arises from frankincense, or some other precious perfume. At length the impious, observing that his body could not be consumed by the fire, ordered the confector to approach, and to plunge his sword into his body. Upon this a quantity of blood gushed out, so that the fire was extinguished and all the multitude were astonished to see the difference thus providentially made between the unbelievers and the elect; of whom the admirable personage before us was, doubtless, one, in our age an apostolical and prophetic teacher, the bishop of the Catholic church of Smyrna. For, whatever he declared, was fulfilled and will be fulfilled. But he envious, malignant, and spiteful enemy of the just, observed the honour put on his martyrdom, and his blameless life; and knowing that he was now crowned with immortality and the prize of unquestionable victory, studied to prevent us from obtaining his body, though many of us longed to have communion with his sacred flesh. For some persons suggested to Nicetes, the father of Herod, and the brother of Aet., to go to the proconsul, and entreat him not to deliver the body to the Christians, lest, said they, leaving the Crucified One, they should begin to worship

him.' And they said these things upon the suggestions and arguments of the Jews, who also watched us, when we were going to take his body from the pile; unacquainted indeed with our views, namely, that it is not possible for us to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all who are saved of the human race, nor ever to worship any other. For we adore HIM as being the Son of God; but we justly love the martyrs as disciples of the Lord, and followers of him, on account of that distinguished affection which they bore towards their King and their Teacher; and may we be ranked at last in their number! The centurion, perceiving the malevolence of the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and burnt it. Then we gathered up his bones,—more precious than gold and jewels,—and deposited them in a proper place; where, if it be possible, we shall meet, and the Lord will grant us, in gladness and joy, to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, both in commemoration of those who have wrestled before us, and for the instruction and confirmation of those who come after. Thus far concerning the blessed Polycarp. Eleven brethren from Philadelphia suffered with him, but he alone is particularly celebrated by all: even by Gentiles he is spoken of in every place. He was, in truth, not only an illustrious teacher, but also an eminent martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, because it was regulated exactly by evangelical principles. For by patience he conquered the unjust magistrate; and thus receiving the crown of immortality, and exulting with Apostles and all the righteous, he glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord, even the Ruler of our bodies, and the Shepherd of his church dispersed through the world.—You desired a full account; and we, for the present, have sent you what will, perhaps, be thought a compendious one, by our brother Mark. When you have read it, send it to the brethren beyond you, that they also may glorify

the Lord, who makes selections from his own servants of holy men, who shall thus honour him by their deaths. To him who is able to conduct us all by his grace and free mercy into his heavenly kingdom, by his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, to him be glory, honour, power, majesty, for ever. AMEN. Salute all the saints: those with us salute you, particularly Evaristus the writer, with all his house. Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus, on the seventh day before the calends of March, on the great sabbath, at the eighth hour. He was apprehended by Herod, under Philip the Trallian Pontifex, Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, an eternal throne from age to age! We pray that you may be strong, brethren, walking in the word Jesus Christ, according to the gospel, with whom be glory to God, even the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of his elected saints, among whom the blessed Polycarp hath suffered martyrdom, with whom may we be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, having followed his steps!

‘These things Caius hath transcribed from the copy of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who also lived with Irenæus. And I, Socrates of Corinth, have transcribed from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all. And I Pionius have transcribed from the fore-mentioned, having made search for it, and received the knowledge of it by a vision of Polycarp, as I shall show in what follows, collecting it which now almost obsolete. So may the Lord Jesus Christ gather me with his elect, to whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. Amen!’

I thought it not amiss for the English reader to see the manner in which books were then successively preserved in the church. Of Irenæus we shall hear more hereafter. Nor ought Pionius’s account of his vision to be hastily slighted, by those who consider

the scarcity of useful writings in those days. Whether the case was worthy of such a divine interposition, we, who indolently enjoy books without end, can scarcely be judges. However, if any choose to add this to the number of pious frauds, which certainly did once much abound, the authenticity of the account will still, in substance, remain unimpeached, as very near the whole of it is in Eusebius. This historian mentions Metrodorus, a presbyter of the sect of Marcion, who perished in the flames among others who suffered at Smyrna. It cannot be denied that heretics also have had their martyrs. Pride and obstinacy will, in some minds, persist even to death. But as all, who have been classed among heretics, have not been so in reality, Metrodorus might be a very different sort of a man from Marcion.

A comparative view of a sound Christian hero suffering, as we have seen Polycarp did, with a Roman Stoic or untutored Indian, undergoing afflictions, where we could have an opportunity of surveying all circumstances, might show, in a practical light, the peculiar genius and spirit of Christianity, and its divine superiority. At the same time, those who content themselves with a cold, speculative, and, as they term it, rational religion, may ask themselves how it would have suited their principles to endure what Polycarp did;—and whether something of what is falsely called enthusiasm, and which the foregoing epistle breathes so abundantly, be not really divine and truly rational in the best sense.

VI.—THE MARTYRS OF LYONS AND VIENNE.

THE flame of the persecution by Antoninus reached a country, which, hitherto, has afforded us no ecclesiastical materials: I mean that of France, in those times called Gallia. Two neighbouring cities, Vienne and Lyons, appear to have been much fa-

voured with evangelical light and love. Vienne was an ancient Roman colony; Lyons was more modern, and her present bishop was Pothinus. His very name points him out to be a Grecian. Irenæus was a presbyter of Lyons, and seems to have been the author of the epistle which Eusebius has preserved, and which the reader shall see presently. Other names concerned in these events are evidently of Greek extraction, and it is hence most probable that some Asiatic Greeks had been the founders of these churches. Whoever casts his eye on the map of France, and sees the situation of Lyons at present the largest and most populous city in that kingdom, next to Paris, may observe how favourable the confluence of the Rhine and the Soane—anciently called the Arar—on which it stands, is for the purposes of commerce. The navigation of the Mediterranean, in all probability, was conducted by merchants of Lyons and of Smyrna; and, hence, the easy introduction of the gospel from the latter place, and from the other Asiatic churches is apparent. How much God hath blessed the work in France, the accounts of their sufferings will evince. Lyons and Vienne appear to be daughters, of whom their Asiatic mothers needed not to be ashamed.

The epistle of the churches of Vienne and Lyons, to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia.

The servants of Christ, sojourning in Vienne and Lyons, in France, to the brethren in Asia propria and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption with us, peace, and grace, and glory from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are not competent to describe with accuracy, nor is it in our power to express the greatness of the affliction sustained here by the saints, the intense animosity of the heathen against them, and the complicated sufferings of the blessed martyrs. The grand enemy assaulted us with all his might; and by his

first essays, exhibited intentions of exercising malice without limits and without control. He left no method untried to habituate his slaves to his bloody work, and to prepare them by previous exercises against the servants of God. Christians were absolutely prohibited from appearing, in any houses except their own, in baths, in the market, or in any public place whatever. The grace of God, however, fought for us, preserving the weak, and exposing the strong; who, like pillars, were able to withstand him in patience, and to draw the whole fury of the wicked against themselves. These entered into the contest, and sustained every species of pain and reproach. What was heavy to others, to them was light, while they were hastening to Christ, evincing, indeed, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. The first trial was from the people at large; shouts, blows, the dragging of their bodies, the plundering of their goods, casting of stones, and the confining of them within their own houses, and all the indignities which may be expected from a fierce and outrageous multitude, these were magnanimously sustained. And now, being led into the Forum by the tribune and the magistrates, they were examined before all the people, whether they were Christians; and, on pleading guilty, were shut up in prison till the arrival of the governor. Before him they were at length brought; and he treated us with great savageness of manners. The spirit of Vettius Epagathus, one of the brethren, was roused, a man full of charity both to God and man, whose conduct was so exemplary, though but a youth, that he might justly be compared to old Zacharias: for he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, a man ever unwearied in acts of beneficence to his neighbours, full of zeal towards God, and fervent in spirit. He could not bear to see so manifest a perversion of jus-

tice ; but, being moved with indignation, he demanded to be heard in behalf of the brethren, and pledged himself to prove that there was nothing atheistic or impious among them. Those about the tribunal shouted against him : he was a man of quality : and the governor, being vexed and irritated by so equitable a demand from such a person, only asked him if he were a Christian ; and this he confessed in the most open manner :—the consequence was, that he was ranked among the martyrs. He was called, indeed, the Advocate of the Christians ; but he had an advocate within, the Holy Spirit more abundantly than Zacharias, which he demonstrated by the fulness of his charity, cheerfully laying down his life in defence of his brethren : for he was, and is still, a genuine disciple of Christ, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. The rest began not to be distinguished. The capital martyrs appeared indeed ready for the contest, and discharged their part with all alacrity of mind. Others seemed not so ready ; but rather, unexercised, and as yet weak, and unable to sustain the shock of such a contest. Of these, ten in number lapsed, whose case filled us with great and unmeasurable sorrow, and dejected the spirits of those who had not yet been apprehended, who, though they sustained all indignities, yet deserted not the martyrs in their distress. Thus we were all much alarmed, because of the uncertain event of confession ; not that we dreaded the torments with which we were threatened, but because we looked forward unto the end, and feared the danger of apostacy. Persons were now apprehended daily of such as were counted worthy to fill up the number of the lapsed, so that the most excellent were selected from the two churches, even those whose labour they had been founded and established. There were seized, at the same time, some of our heathen servants,—for the governor had openly ordered us all to be sought for,—who, by the

impulse of Satan, fearing the torments which they saw inflicted on the saints, at the suggestion of the soldiers, accused us of eating human flesh, and of various unnatural crimes, and of things not fit even to be mentioned or imagined, and such as ought not to be believed of mankind. These things being divulged, all were incensed even to madness against us; so that if some were formerly more moderate, on account of any connexions of blood, affinity, or friendship, they were then transported beyond all bounds with indignation. Now it was that our Lord's word was fulfilled, "The time will come when, whosoever killed you, will think that he doeth God service." The holy martyrs now sustained tortures which exceed the powers of description; Satan labouring, by means of these tortures, to extort something slanderous against Christianity. The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and the soldiers, was spent in a particular manner on Sanctus of Vienne, the deacon; and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wrestler in spiritual things; and on Attalus of Pergamus, a man who had ever been the pillar and support of our church; and, lastly, on Blandina, through whom Christ showed, that those things, that appear unsightly and contemptible among men, are most honourable in the presence of God, on account of love to his name, exhibited in real energy, and not in boasting and pompous pretences. For while we all feared: and among the rest while her mistress according to the flesh, who herself was one of the noble army of martyrs, dreaded that she would not be able to witness a good confession, because of the weakness of her body, Blandina was endued with so much fortitude, that those, who successively tortured her from morning to night, were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing whilst her

body was torn and laid open: they confessed that any single species of the torture would have been sufficient to dispatch her, much more so great a variety as had been applied. But the blessed woman, as a generous wrestler, recovered fresh vigour in the act of confession; and it was an evident refreshment, support, and an annihilation of all her pains to say, "I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us."

In the mean time Sanctus, having sustained in a manner more than human the most barbarous indignities, while the impious hoped to extort from him something injurious to the gospel, through the duration and intenseness of his sufferings, resisted with so much firmness, that he would neither tell his own name, nor that of his nation or state, nor whether he was a freeman or slave; but to every interrogatory he answered in Latin, 'I am a Christian.' This, he repeatedly owned, was to him both name, and state, and race, and every thing; and nothing else could the heathen draw from him. Hence the indignation of the governor and of the torturers was fiercely levelled against this holy person, so that having exhausted all the usual methods of torture, they at last fixed brazen plates to the most tender parts of his body. These were made red hot, for the purpose of scorching him, and yet he remained upright and inflexible, and firm in his confession; being, no doubt, bedewed and refreshed by the heavenly fountain of the water of life which flows from Christ. His body witnessed indeed the ghastly tortures which he had sustained, being one continued wound and bruise, altogether contracted, and no longer retaining the form of a human creature: in this man the view of Christ suffering wrought great marvels, confounded the adversary, and showed, for the encouragement of the rest, that nothing is to be feared where the love of the Father is, and that nothing is painful, where the *glory of Christ* is exhibited. For when, after some

days, the impious had renewed his tortures, and imagined that a fresh application of the same methods of punishment to his wounds, now swollen and inflamed, must either overcome his constancy, or by despatching him on the spot, strike a terror into the rest, as he could not even bear to be touched by the hand, this was so far from being the case, that, contrary to all expectation, his body recovered its natural position in the second course of torture; he was restored to his former shape and to the use of his limbs; so that, by the grace of Christ, this cruelty proved not a punishment, but a cure.

One of those who had denied Christ was Biblias, a female. Satan, imagining that he had now devoured her, and desirous to augment her condemnation, by inducing her to accuse the Christians falsely, caused her to be led to the torture; and supposing her to be a weak and timorous creature, tempted her to charge us with horrid impieties. But in her torture she recovered herself, and awoke as out of a deep sleep, being admonished, by a temporary punishment, of the danger of eternal fire in hell; and, in opposition to the impious, she said, ‘How can we eat infants,—we, to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of beasts.’ And now she professed herself a Christian, and was added to the army of martyrs. The power of Christ, manifested in the patience of his people, had now exhausted the usual artifices of torment; and the devil was driven to new resources. Christians were thrust into the darkest and most noisome parts of the prison: their feet were distended in a wooden trunk, even to the fifth hole; and in this situation they suffered all the indignities which diabolical malice could inflict. Hence many of them were suffocated in prison, whom the Lord, showing forth his own glory, was pleased thus to take to himself. The rest, though afflicted to such a degree as to seem scarcely capable of recovery under the kindest treatment, destitute as they were of all help and support,

yet remained alive, strengthened by the Lord, and confirmed both in body and mind : and these encouraged and supported the rest.

Some young persons who had been lately seized, and whose bodies had been unexercised with sufferings, unequal to the severity of the confinement expired. The blessed Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, upwards of ninety years of age, and very infirm and asthmatic, yet strong in spirit, and panting after martyrdom, was dragged before the tribunal. His body was worn out indeed with age and disease, yet he retained a soul through which Christ might triumph. Borne by the soldiers to the tribunal, and attended by the magistrates and all the multitude, shouting against him, as if he were Christ himself, he made a good confession. Being asked by the governor, who was the God of the Christians, he answered, If ye be worthy, ye shall know. He was then unmercifully dragged about, and suffered various of ill treatment : those, who were near, insulted him with their hands and feet, without the least respect to his age : and those at a distance threw at him whatever came to hand ; every one looked upon himself as deficient in zeal, if he did not insult him in some way or another. For thus they imagined they revenged the cause of their gods. He was thrown into prison almost breathless ; and after two days expired.

And here appeared a remarkable dispensation of Providence, and the immense compassion of Jesus, rarely exhibited indeed among the brethren, but not foreign to the character of Christ. Many, who, when first apprehended, had denied their Saviour, were notwithstanding shut up in prison, and suffered dreadful severities, as this denial of Christ had availed them not. But those who confessed him, were imprisoned as Christians, abstracted from any other charge. Now the former, as murderers and incontinent wretches, were punished much more than the

rest: besides, the joy of martyrdom supported the latter, and the hope of the promises, and the love of Christ, and the Spirit of the Father. The former were oppressed with the pangs of guilt; so that, while they were dragged along, their very countenances distinguished them from the rest; but the faithful proceeded with cheerful lips; their countenances shone with much grace and glory: their bonds were as the most beautiful ornaments, and they themselves looked as brides adorned with their richest array, breathing the fragrance of Christ so much, that some thought they had been literally perfumed. The others went on dejected, spiritless, and forlorn, and in every way disgraced, even insulted by the heathen as cowards and poltroons, and treated as murderers: they had lost the precious, the glorious, the soul-reviving appellation. The rest, observing these things, were confirmed in the faith, confessed without hesitation on their being apprehended, nor admitted the diabolical suggestion for a moment.

The martyrs were put to death in various ways: or, in other words, they wove a chaplet of various odours and flowers, and presented it to the Father. In truth, it became the wisdom and goodness of God to appoint that his servants, after enduring a great and variegated contest, should, as victors, receive the great crown of immortality. Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were led to the wild beasts into the amphitheatre, to the common spectacle of Gentile inhumanity.

One day extraordinary of the shows being afforded to the people on our account, Maturus and Sanctus again underwent various tortures in the amphitheatre, as if they had suffered nothing before. Thus were they treated like those wrestlers, who, having conquered several times already, were obliged afresh to contend with other conquerors by fresh lots, till some one was conqueror of the whole number, and as such was crowned. Here they sustained again, as they

were led to the amphitheatro, the blows usually inflicted on those who were condemned to wild beasts; they were exposed to be dragged and torn by the beasts, and to all the barbarities which the multitude with shouts exacted, and above all to the hot iron chair, in which their bodies were roasted, and emitted a disgusting smell. Nor was this all: the persecutors raged still more, if possible, to overcome their patience. But not a word could be extorted from Sanctus, besides what he first had uttered—the word of confession. These then after remaining alive a long time, expired at length, and became a spectacle to the world, equivalent to all the variety usual in the fights of gladiators.

Blandina, suspended from a stake, was exposed a food to the wild beasts; she was seen suspended in the form of a cross, and employed in vehement supplication. The sight inspired the combatants with much alacrity, while they beheld with their bodily eyes, in the person of their sister, the figure of him who was crucified for them, that he might persuade those who believe in him, that every one who suffers for the glory of Christ, always has communion with the living God. None of the beasts at that time touched her: she was taken down from the stake, thrown again into prison, and reserved for a future contest; that having overcome in various exercises she might fully condemn the old serpent, and persuade brethren with a noble spirit of Christian emulation. Weak and contemptible as she might be deemed when clothed with Christ, the mighty and invincible champion, she became victorious over the enemy in a variety of encounters, and was crowned with immortality.

Attalus also was vehemently demanded by the multitude; for he was a person of great reputation among us. He advanced in all the cheerfulness and serenity of a good conscience,—an experienced Christian, and ever ready and active in bearing the

mony to the truth. He was led round the amphitheatre, and a tablet was carried before him, inscribed in Latin, 'This is Attalus the Christian.' The rage of the people would have had him despatched immediately; but the governor understanding that he was a Roman, ordered him back to prison: and concerning him and others, who could plead the same privilege of Roman citizenship, he wrote to the emperor, and waited for his instructions.

The interval which this circumstance occasioned was not unfruitful to the Church. The unbounded compassion of Christ appeared in the patience of many. ¹ Dead members were restored to life by the means of the living, and the martyrs became singularly serviceable to the lapsed; and thus the church rejoiced to receive her sons returning to her bosom: for by these means most of those who had denied Christ were recovered, and dared to profess their Saviour. They felt again the divine life in their souls; they approached to the tribunal, and their God, who willeth not the death of a sinner, being again precious to their souls, they desired a fresh opportunity of being interrogated by the governor.

Cæsar² sent orders that the confessors of Christ should be put to death, and that the apostates from their divine master should be dismissed. It was now the general assembly, held annually at Lyons, and requested from all parts, and this was the time when the Christian prisoners were again exposed to the populace. The governor again interrogated. Roman citizens had the privilege of dying by decollation; the rest were exposed to wild beasts; and now it was that our Redeemer was magnified in those who had

¹ Dead in their spiritual affections.

It must be confessed that the power of Stoicism in hardening the heart was never more strongly illustrated than in the case of Marcus Antoninus. Thus breaking all the rights of Roman citizenship, and in the feelings of humanity. It puts me in mind of Mr. Pope's lines,

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast
Their virtue fix'd—'tis fix'd as in a frost.

apostatized. They were interrogated separate from the rest, as persons soon to be dismissed, and made a confession to the surprise of the Gentiles, and were added to the list of martyrs. A small number still remained in apostacy; but they were those who possessed not the least spark of divine faith, had not the least acquaintance with the riches of Christ in their souls, and had no fear of God before their eyes, whose life had brought reproach on Christianity, and had evidenced them to be the children of perdition;¹ but all the rest were added to the church.

During their examination, a man who had lived many years in France, and was generally known for his love of God and zealous regard for divine truth, a person of apostolical endowments, a physician by profession, a Phrygian by nation, and named Alexander, stood near the tribunal, and by his gestures encouraged them to profess the faith. He appeared to all who surrounded the tribunal as one who travailed in much pain on their account. And now the multitude, incensed at the Christian integrity exhibited at the conclusion by the lapsed, made a clamour against Alexander as the cause of this change. Upon which the governor ordered him into his presence, and asked him who he was. He declared that he was a Christian. The former, in great wrath, condemned him instantly to the wild beasts; and the next day he was introduced with Attalus. For the governor, willing to gratify the people, delivered Attalus again to the wild beasts; and these two underwent all the usual methods of torture in the amphitheatre: indeed they sustained a very grievous conflict, and at length expired. Alexander neither groaned nor spake a word, but in his heart conversed

¹ The difference between true and merely professing Christians is well stated, and deserves to be noticed. A season of persecution separates real believers and real experienced Christians from others much more visibly than ministers can now do by the most judicious distinctions.

with God. Attalus, sitting on the iron chair, and being scorched, when the smell issued from him, said to the multitude in Latin, 'This indeed which we do is to devour men: but we devour not our fellow-creatures, nor practise any other wickedness.' Being asked what is the name of God, he answered, 'God has not a name as men have.'

On the last day of the spectacles, Blandina was again introduced with Ponticus, a youth of fifteen. They had been daily brought in to see the punishment of the rest. They were ordered to swear by the idols; and the mob perceiving them to persevere immoveably, and to treat their menaces with superior contempt, were incensed; and no pity was shown either to the sex of the one or to the tender age of the other. Their tortures were now aggravated by all sorts of methods, and the whole round of barbarities was inflicted: but menaces and punishments were equally ineffectual. Ponticus, animated by his sister, who was observed by the heathen to strengthen and confirm him, after a magnanimous exertion of patience, yielded up the ghost.

And now the blessed Blandina, last of all, as a generous mother having exhorted her children, and sent them before her victorious to the King, reviewing the whole series of their sufferings, hastened to undergo the same herself, rejoicing and triumphing in her exit, as if invited to a marriage supper, not going to be exposed to wild beasts. After she had endured stripes, the tearing of the beasts, and the iron chair, she was enclosed in a net, and thrown to a bull; and having been tossed some time by the animal, and proving quite superior to her pains, through the influence of hope, and the realizing view of the objects of her faith and her fellowship with Christ, she at length breathed out her soul. Even her enemies confessed that no woman among them had ever suffered such and so great things. But their madness against the saints was not yet satiated. For the fierce

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an object of great importance martyrs having been contumacious exposed for six days, were reduced to ashes, and scattered by the wind, so that not the least particle of them remained on earth any more. And they said, they could prevail against the power of resurrection, and that they would die with joy. Now let us see, and if their God can help them out of our hands.'

that the reader may judge, the greatness of this persecution in Lyons, from this detail of the conduct of the martyrs. He adds something from the meekness, and charity of the martyrs, which he contrasts with the cruelty of the Novatians, which afterwards he contrasts with the cruelty of the church. 'They were such persons, who, though he was in the right it was not robbery to be elevated to such height, but he had borne witness for Christ, but often, in a variety of ways, not the venerable persons, but us to address them by letter or word, gave them no rest. For it was they gave the appellation of heretics to the church.'



and savage tribes of men, being instigated by the ferocious enemy of mankind, were not easily softened; and they now began another peculiar war against the bodies of the saints. That they had been conquered by their patience, produced no stings of remorse. Indeed the feelings of common sense and humanity appear to have been extinguished among them. Disappointment increased their fury. The devil, the governor, and the mob equally showed their malice, that the scripture might be fulfilled, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," as well as, "He that is holy, let him be holy still."¹ They now exposed to dogs, the bodies of those who had been suffocated in prison, and carefully watched night and day, lest any of our people should by stealth perform the funeral rites. And then exposing what had been left by the wild beasts or by the fire, relics partly torn, and partly scorched, and the heads with the trunks, they preserved them by military guards unburied for several days. Some gnashed on them with their teeth, desirous, if possible, to make them feel still more of their malice. Others laughed and insulted them, praising their own gods, and ascribing the vengeance inflicted on the martyrs to them. All, however, were not of this ferocious mould. Yet even those who were of a gentler spirit, and who sympathized with us, in some degree, upbraided us, often saying, 'Where is your God, and what profit do ye derive from their religion, which ye valued above life itself?'

As for ourselves, our sorrow was greatly increased because we were deprived of the melancholy satisfaction of interring our friends. Neither the darkness of the night could befriend us, nor could we prevail by prayers or by price. They watched the bodies with unremitting vigilance, as if to deprive them of

¹ Rev. xxii. 11. A striking proof of the sacred regard paid to that divine work—the book of the Revelation—in the second century.

sepulchre, was to them an object of great importance. The bodies of the martyrs having been contumeliously treated and exposed for six days, were burnt and reduced to ashes, and scattered by the wicked into the Rhone, that not the least particle of them might appear on the earth any more. And they did these things as if they could prevail against God, and prevent their resurrection, and that they might deter others, as they said, from the hope of a future life. ‘On which relying, they introduce a strange and new religion, and despise the most excruciating tortures, and die with joy. Now let us see if they will rise again, and if their God can help them and deliver them out of our hands.’

Eusebius observes here, that the reader may judge, by analogy, of the fierceness of this persecution in other parts of the empire, from this detail of the affairs at Lyons, and then adds something from the epistle concerning the humility, meekness, and charity of the martyrs; and this he contrasts with the unrelenting spirit of the Novatians, which afterwards appeared in the church. ‘They were such sincere followers of Christ, who, though he was in the form of a man, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,’ that though elevated to such height of glory, and though they had borne witness for Christ not once or twice only, but often, in a variety of sufferings, yet they assumed not the venerable name of martyrs, nor permitted us to address them as such. But if any of us, by letter or word, gave them the title, they reproved us vehemently. For it was with much pleasure that they gave the appellation in a peculiar sense to him who is the “faithful and true witness,” the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of divine life. And they remembered with respect the deceased martyrs, and said; They indeed were martyrs whom Christ hath deigned to receive to himself in their confession, sealing their

testimony by their exit: but we are low and mean professors. With tears they intreated the brethren to pray fervently for them, that they might be perfected.

They exhibited, however, in real facts, the energy of the character of martyrs, and answered with much boldness to the Gentiles: Their magnanimity, undaunted, calm, and intrepid, was visible to all the world, though the fear of God induced them to refuse the title of martyrs. They humbled themselves under the mighty hand by which they are now exalted. 1 Peter v. They were ready to give a modest reason of the hope that was in them before all. They accused none. They took pleasure in commending, none in censuring; and they prayed for their murderers, as Stephen, the accomplished martyr did, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And if he prayed thus for those who stoned him, how much more ought Christians to pray for the brethren?—They never gloried in an unbecoming way over the lapsed; but, on the contrary, they supplied their weaknesses with maternal tenderness, and shed many tears over them to the Father: they asked life for them, and he gave them it, which they were glad to communicate to their neighbours. Thus in all things they came off victorious before God,—ever cultivating peace,—ever commending peace—In peace they went to God, leaving neither trouble to their mother the church, nor faction and sedition to the brethren; but joy, peace, unanimity, and charity.

Eusebius has given us another passage also which deserves attention. Alcibiades, one of the martyrs, had led, before the persecution, the life of an ascetic—he used to subsist only on bread and water. As he continued the same regimen while in confinement, it was revealed in a vision to Attalus, after his first contest in the amphitheatre, that Alcibiades did ill not to use the creatures of God, and that he gave an occasion of scandal to others. Alcibiades was hence

induced to change his diet, and to partake of the bounty of God with thanksgiving.—Eusebius tells us also of an epistle directed by these martyrs to Eleutherus, the bishop of Rome, in which they give a very honourable encomium of Irenæus the presbyter. Of him we shall have occasion to speak more hereafter. He was appointed successor to Pothinus; he outlived the storm, and governed the church afterwards with much ability and success. The letter to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, of which Eusebius has given us such large and valuable extracts, furnishes strong proofs of his piety and judgment.

The superstitions, which afterwards arose in so great abundance, and with so much strength; and which, like a dense cloud, so long obscured the light of the church, seem scarcely to have shaded the glory of those Gallic martyrs in any degree. The case of Alcibiades, and the wholesome check which the divine goodness put to his well-meant austerities, demonstrate that excesses of this nature had not yet gained any remarkable ascendancy in the church. And the description of the humility and charity of the martyrs shows a spirit much superior to that which we shall have occasion, with regret, to notice in some succeeding annals of martyrdom.

VII.—THE STATE OF CHRISTIANS UNDER THE REIGNS OF COMMODUS, PERTINAX, AND JULIAN.—THE STORY OF PEREGRINUS.

THE reigns of the two last-mentioned emperors, which close the century, are short, and contain no Christian memoirs. That of Commodus is remarkable for the peace granted to the church of Christ through the world. The method which Divine Providence used for this purpose is still more so. Marcia, a woman of low rank, was the favourite concubine of this emperor. She had, on some account not now understood, a predilection for the

Christians, and employed her interest with Commodus in their favour. He was himself the most vicious and profligate of all mortals, though the son of the grave Marcus Antoninus. Those, who looked at secular objects and moral decorum alone, might regret the change of emperors. In one particular point only, namely, in his conduct towards the Christians, Commodus was more just and equitable than his father. And the power and goodness of God, in making even such wretched characters as Commodus and Marcia to stem the torrent of persecution, and to afford a breathing-time of twelve years under the son, after eighteen years of the most cruel sufferings under the father, deserve to be remarked. For certainly the church of Christ has no communion with debauchees; and though it be abhorrent, also, in its plan and spirit from the system of proud philosophers, yet it is always friendly to every thing virtuous and laudable in society.—The fact is, it has a taste peculiarly its own: God's way are not like ours.—The gospel now flourished abundantly; and many of the nobility of Rome, with their whole families, embraced it. Such a circumstance would naturally excite the envy of the great. The Roman senate felt its dignity defiled by innovations, which to them appeared to the last degree contemptible; and to this malignant source, I think, is to be ascribed the only instance of persecution in this reign.

Apollonius, at that time a person renowned for learning and philosophy in Rome, was a sincere Christian; and as such was accused by an informer before Perennis, a magistrate of considerable influence in the reign of Commodus. The law of Antoninus Pius had enacted grievous punishments against the accusers of Christians. One cannot suppose his edict had any force during the reign of his successor Marcus; but under Commodus it was revived; or rather, a new one, still more severe.

was enacted, that the accusers should be put to death. Perennis sentenced the accuser accordingly, and his legs were broken. Thus far he seems to have complied with the injunctions of the law: in what follows he obeyed the dictates of his own malice, or rather that of the senate. He begged of the prisoner, with much earnestness, that he would give an account of his faith before the senate and the court. Apollonius complied, and delivered an apology for Christianity; in consequence of which, by a decree of the senate, he was beheaded. It is not quite easy to account for this procedure. It is perhaps the only trial recorded in history where both the accuser and the accused suffered judicially. Eusebius observes, that the laws were still in force, commanding Christians to be put to death, who had been presented before the tribunal. But Adrian, or certainly Antoninus Pius, had abrogated this iniquitous edict of Trajan. Under Marcus it might be revived,—as what severity against Christians was not to be expected from that cruel persecutor? Now Commodus, by menacing accusers with death, probably supposed he had sufficiently secured the Christians. Yet, if a formal abrogation of the law against Christians did not actually take place, one may see how Apollonius came to suffer as well as his adversary. In truth, if he had been silent, it is very likely he would have saved his own life. Insidious artifices, under the pretence of much respect and desire of information, seem to have drawn him into a measure which cost him so dear:—He died, however, in the best of causes!

There is, in the work of Lucian, a remarkable story of a person named Peregrinus, which, as it falls in with this century, and throws light on the character of the Christians who then lived, deserves to be here introduced. ‘In his youth,’ says this author, ‘he fell into shameful crimes, for which he was near losing his life in Armenia and Asia. I will not

dwell on those crimes; but I am persuaded what I am about to say is worthy of attention. This is none of you but knows, that being chagrined to find his father was still alive, after being upwards of sixty years of age, he strangled him. The rumour of so black a crime being spread abroad, he betrays his guilt by flight. He wandered about in distant countries to conceal the place of his retreat. Upon coming into Judea, he learnt the admirable doctrine of the Christians, by conversing with the priests and teachers. In a little time, he showed them that they were but children compared to himself: for he became not only a prophet, but the head of their congregation: in a word, he was every thing to them: he explained their books, and composed several tracts himself; insomuch that they spoke of him sometimes as a god, and certainly considered him as a lawgiver and a ruler.—However, the people, in fact, adore that great person who has been crucified in Palestine, as being the first to have taught men that religion.—While these things were going on, Peregrinus was apprehended, and put in prison, on account of his being a Christian. This disgrace loaded him with honour: it was the very thing he ardently desired: it made him more reputable among those of that persuasion, and furnished him with a power of performing wonderful things. The Christians, grievously afflicted at his confinement, used their utmost efforts to procure him liberty; and as they saw they could not compass this, they provided abundantly for all his wants, and rendered him all imaginable services. There was scarcely by the break of day, at the prison-gate, a company of old women, widows, and orphans, some of whom, after having corrupted the guard with money, passed the night with him. There they partook together of elegant repasts, and entertained one another with religious discourses. They called that excellent man the New Socrates. There came even Christi-

deputed from many cities of Asia, to converse with him, to comfort him, and to bring him supplies of money; for the care and diligence which the Christians exert in these junctures is incredible: they spare nothing in such cases. They sent, therefore, large sums to Peregrinus; and his confinement was to him an occasion of amassing great riches; for these poor creatures are firmly persuaded they shall one day enjoy immortal life; therefore they despise death with wonderful courage, and offer themselves voluntarily to punishment. Their first lawgiver has put it into their heads that they are all brethren. Since they separated from us, they persevere in rejecting the gods of the Grecians, and in worshipping that deceiver who was crucified: they regulate their manners and conduct by his laws; they despise, therefore, all earthly possessions, and use them in common. Therefore, if any magician or juggler, any cunning fellow, who knows how to make his advantage of opportunity, happens to get into their society, he immediately grows rich; because it is easy for a man of this sort to abuse the simplicity of these silly people. Peregrinus, however, was set at liberty by the president of Syria, who was a lover of philosophy, and of its professors; and who, having perceived that this man courted death out of vanity and a fondness of renown, released him, despising him too much to have a desire of inflicting capital punishment on him. Peregrinus returned into his own country, and, as some were inclined to prosecute him on account of his parricide, he gave all his wealth to his fellow-citizens, who, being gained by this liberality, imposed silence on his accusers. He left his country a second time, in order to travel, reckoning he should find every thing he wanted in the purses of the Christians, who were punctual in accompanying him wherever he went, and in supplying him with all things in abundance. He subsisted in this manner for a considerable time;

but having done something which the Christians abhor,—they saw him, I think, make use of some meats forbidden amongst them,—he was abandoned by them; insomuch that having not any longer the means of support, he would fain have revoked the donation he had made to his country.'

The native place of this extraordinary man was Parium in Mysia. After his renunciation of Christianity, he assumed the character of a philosopher. In that light he is mentioned by several heathen authors, and this part he acted till the time of his death; when, in his old age, he threw himself into the flames, probably because suicide was honourable in the eyes of the Gentiles, and because Empedocles, a brother philosopher, had thrown himself into the volcano at Mount Ætna.

Peregrinus is no very uncommon character. On a less extended scale, men of extreme wickedness in a similar way may frequently be noticed, viz. men whose early life has been devoted to nothing but vices: then, afterwards, something of the garb and mode of real Christians is assumed by these deceivers. But it is not every one who has the abilities of Peregrinus to wear the hypocritical garb so assumed with consummate address, and to impose on genuine Christians of undoubted discernment. Providence, however, often sets a dismal mark upon such men even in this life. Peregrinus lived long enough to be proved a complete impostor, and to be rendered intolerable to Christians; he acted the philosopher afterwards, it seems, a long time for what is often called philosophy is inconsistent enough with much hypocrisy; and his dreadful end is awfully instructive to mankind.

Yet what is there in all this account of the Christians, discoloured as it is by the malignant author, which does not tend to their honour? While Peregrinus made a creditable profession, they received and rejoiced in him. They did not pretend to isolate

libility. His superior parts and artifice enabled him a long time to deceive. It is probable that he avoided as much as possible the society of the most sagacious and penetrating among the Christians. The followers of Jesus had learnt to spare the mote in their brother's eye, to feel the beam in their own. They were most solicitously guarded against that species of deception which is the most fatal, namely, the delusion of a man's own heart. If many of them were hence too much exposed to the snares of designing men, the thing tells surely to their honour, rather than to their disgrace. In morals, Christians must then have been, at least, much superior to the rest of mankind : and it is only to be lamented, that he who could relate this story had not the wisdom to make a profitable use of it for himself.

VIII.—THE HERESIES AND CONTROVERSIES OF THIS CENTURY ; AND THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

My plan calls me not to notice minutely all the heresies which appeared in this century ; but I would not omit them whenever they may throw light on the work of God's Holy Spirit and the progress of godliness. On their own account they deserved not much attention ; yet it was necessary to examine and confute some of them : and Irenæus acted charitably in so doing. It is, however, to be regretted, that in his celebrated work against heresies, he should be obliged to employ so much time on scenes of nonsense. Let it be remarked in general, that the same opposition to the deity of Christ, or his manhood, and the same insidious methods of depreciating or abusing the doctrines of grace, continued in the second century, which had begun in the first, with this difference, that they were now multiplied, varied, complicated, and refined by endless subtleties and fancies, in which the poverty of taste and genius, so common in a period when letters are declining, dis-

covers itself no less than the Christian doctrine. Like spots in the sun, however, they vanished and disappeared from time to time, though revived again in different forms and circumstances. Not one of the heresiarchs of this century was able to create a strong and permanent interest; and it is no little proof of the continued goodness and grace of God to his church, that the sound Christians still kept themselves separate and distinct, and preserved the purity of discipline.

It has often been said, that many have been enlisted among the heretics, who were real Christians. When I see a proof of this, I shall take notice of it. But of the heretics in the second century, I fear, in general, no such favourable judgment ought to be passed. The state of Christian affairs in truth was such as to afford no probable reason for any real good man to dissent. Where was there more of piety and virtue to be found than among the general society of Christians? And how could any persons be more exposed to the cross of Christ than they were?

1. The first set of heretics of this century, were those who opposed or corrupted the doctrines of the person of Christ. A single quotation from Eusebius may be sufficient as a specimen.

Speaking of the books which were published in these times, he observes, 'Among them there is found a volume written against the heresy of Artemon, which Paulus of Samosata in our days endeavoured to revive. When this book had confuted the said presumptuous heresy, which maintained Christ to be a mere man, and that this was an ancient opinion; after many leaves tending to the confutation of this blasphemous falsehood, the author writes thus: They affirm that all our ancestors, even the apostles themselves, were of that opinion, and taught the same with them, and that this their true doctrine was preached and embraced to the time of Victor,

he thirteenth bishop of Rome after Peter, and was corrupted by his successor Kephyrinus. This might carry a plausible appearance of truth, were it not, in the first place, contradicted by the holy scriptures, and in the next, by the books of several persons, which they published long before the time of Victor, against the Gentiles, in the defence of the truth, and in confutation of the heresies of their times. I mean Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, and Clement, with many others ; in all which works Christ is preached and published to be God. Who knoweth not that the works of Irenæus, Melito, and all other Christians, do confess Christ to be both God and man ! In fine, how many psalms, and hymns, and canticles were written from the beginning by faithful Christians, which celebrate Christ, the word of God, as no other than God indeed ? How then is it possible, according to their report, that our ancestors, to the days of Victor, should have preached in that way, when the creed of the church for so many years is pronounced as certain, and known to all the world ? And ought they not to be ashamed to report such falsehoods of Victor, when they know it to be a fact, that this very Victor excommunicated Theodotus, a tanner, the father of this apostasy, who denied the divinity of Christ, because he first affirmed Christ to be only man. If Victor, as they report, had been of their blasphemous sentiments, how could he have excommunicated Theodotus the author of the heresy ?

Victor's government was about the close of the second century. The anonymous author before us writes most probably in the former part of the third. Nor is his testimony much invalidated by his being anonymous. The facts to which he speaks were notorious and undeniable. We see hence, that all parties, notwithstanding the contempt which some affect, of the testimony of antiquity and tradition, are glad to avail themselves of it where they can, which is itself a proof the tacit consent of all man-

kind, that this testimony, though by no means decisive, nor such as ought ever to be put in competition with scripture, yet weighs something, and ought not to be treated with unreserved disdain. In our own days the same attempt has been made in the same cause, with what probability of success, in the way of sound argument, let the reader, who has considered the passage I have quoted from Eusebius, judge for himself. In fact, it appears that a denial of the deity of Christ could not find any patron within the pale of the church for the first two hundred years. The prevalence of sentiments derogatory to the person and offices of Christ was reserved for a later period. Every person of any eminence in the church for judgment and piety, hold unequivocally an opposite language. In some of the most renowned we have seen it all along in the course of this century.

This Theodotus was a citizen of Byzantium, a tanner, but a man of parts and learning. Heretical perversions of scripture have often been invented by such persons. Pride and self-conceit seem to have a peculiar ascendancy over men who have acquired knowledge in private by their own industry. And doubtless one of the best advantages of public seminaries is this; that modesty and reasonable submission are inculcated in them, and men, by seeing and feeling their own inferiority, are taught to think more lowly of their own attainments. This self-taught tanner speculated, felt himself important enough to be singular, and revived the heresy of Ebion. He was brought with some other Christians before persecuting magistrates, his companions honestly confessed Christ, and suffered. He was the only man of the company who denied him. In truth, he had no principles strong enough to induce him to bear the cross of Christ. Theodotus lived still a denier of Christ, and being afterwards upbraided for denying his God. 'No,' says he, 'I have not denied God, but man; for Christ is no more.' His heresy

once obtained a new name, that of the God-denying postasy. Persecution frequently does in this life, in part, what the last day will do completely,—separate wheat from tares.

2. The controversy respecting the proper time of the observation of Easter, which had been amicably adjusted between Polycarp of Smyrna, and Anicetus of Rome, who had agreed to differ, was unhappily revived towards the close of this century. Synods were held concerning it, and an uniformity was attempted in vain, throughout the church. Victor of Rome, with much arrogance and temerity, as if he had felt the very soul of the future papacy formed in himself, inveighed against the Asiatic churches, and pronounced them excommunicated persons. The firmness, moderation, and charity of one man was of great service in quashing this dangerous contention. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, rebuked the uncharitable spirit of Victor, reminded him of the union between Polycarp and his predecessor Anicetus, notwithstanding their difference of sentiment in this point, and pressed the strong obligation of Christians to love and unity, though they might differ in smaller matters; and surely a smaller matter of diversity was scarcely ever known to occasion contention.

That so slight a subject should appear of so great moment at this time, seems no small proof that the power of true godliness had suffered some depression; and was an omen, towards the close of this century, of the decay of the happy effects of the first great Effusion of the Spirit. When faith and love are simple, strong, and eminently active, such subjects of debate are ever known to vanish, like mist before the sun.

3. The church was internally shaken and much disfigured by the heresy of Montanus. This is the account of it given by Apollinaris, of Hierapolis, who took pains to confute it. ‘Being lately at Ancyra which throughout filled,—

not with prophets, as they call them, but with false prophets: where, with the help of the Lord, I disputed publicly for many days against them, so that the church rejoiced and was confirmed in the truth; and the adversaries were vexed and murmured. It originated in the following manner: There is a village in Mysia, a region of Phrygia, called Ardaba, where we are told that Montanus, a late convert in the time of Gratus, proconsul of Asia, gave advantage to Satan by being elated with ambition. The man behaved in a frantic manner, and pretended to prophesy. Some who heard him, checked him as a lunatic, and forbade his public exhibitions, mindful of our Saviour's predictions and warnings against false prophets: but others boasted of him as endued with the Holy Ghost, and forgetting the divine admonitions, were so ensnared by his arts as to encourage the imposture. Two women were by Satan possessed of the same spirit, and spake foolish and fanatical things. They gloried in their own supposed superior sanctity and happiness; and were deluded with the most flattering expectations.—Few of the Phrygians were seduced, though they took upon them to revile every church under heaven which did not pay homage to their pretended inspirations. The faithful throughout Asia, in frequent synods, examined and condemned the heresy.'

It has ever been one of the greatest trials to men really led by the Spirit of God,—besides the open opposition of the profane,—to be obliged to encounter the subtle devices of Satan, who often raises up pretended illuminations, and so connects them with delusion, folly, wickedness, and self conceit, that they expose true godliness to the imputation of enthusiasm, and to contempt and disgrace. The marks of distinction are plain to minds which are serious and of tolerable judgment and discretion; but men, void of the fear of God, will not distinguish. We see here an instance of what has often been re-

ated from that day to the present in the church of Christ; and Christians should never fail to do so, what they then did, namely, they should examine, expose, condemn, and separate themselves from such delusions. The enthusiasts of every age follow the pattern of Montanus in folly, pride, and uncharitableness: nothing happens here but what is foretold in scripture: and in truth, delusions of this sort so generally accompany the real work of God, that wherever that appears, these very seldom fail to appear also.

4. But the eruptions of fanaticism are too wild and unnatural to remain long in any degree of strength. Whatever high pretensions they make to the influences of the Divine Spirit, they are ever unfavourable to them in reality; not only by their unsteady tendency during the paroxysm of zeal, but much more so by the effects of contemptuous proneness and incredulous scepticism which they leave behind them. It is for the sake of these chiefly that Satan seems to invent and support such delusions.—But his grand resource against the gospel is drawn from contrivances more congenial with the nature of man. Human philosophy after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ, formed the worst corruption of this century; which I shall lay open, to the best of my judgment, from the lights of history. It was toward the close of the century that it made its appearance, nor were the effects of it very great at present: in the next century they appeared very distinctly.

Alexandria was at this time the most renowned seminary of learning. A sort of philosophers there appeared who called themselves Eclectics, because, without tying themselves down to any one set of rules, they chose what they thought most agreeable to truth from different masters and sects. Their pretensions were specious; and while they preserved the appearance of candour, moderation, and dispas-

sionate inquiry, they administered much fuel to the pride of men leaning to their own understandings. Ammonius Saccas, a famous Alexandrian teacher, seems to have reduced the opinions of this sect to a system. Plato was his principal guide ; but he invented many things of which Plato never dreamed. What his religious profession was is disputed among the learned. Undoubtedly he was educated a Christian ; and though Porphyry, in his enmity against Christianity, observes that he forsook the gospel, and returned to Gentilism, yet the testimony of Eusebius, who must have known, seems decisive to the contrary ; it proves that he continued a Christian all his days : his tracts on the agreement of Moses and Jesus, and his harmony of the four Gospels, demonstrate that he desired to be considered as a Christian. This man fancied that all religions, vulgar and philosophical, Grecian and barbarous, Jewish and Gentile, meant the same thing at bottom. He undertook by allegorizing and subtilizing various fables and systems, to make up a coalition of all sects and religions ; and, from his labours, continued by his disciples—some of whose works still remain,—his followers were taught to look on Jew, Philosopher, vulgar Pagan, and Christian, as all of the same creed.

We have hitherto found it no hard matter to discover, in the teachers and writers of Christianity, the vital doctrines of Christ. We shall now perceive that the most precious truths of the gospel began to be less attended to, and less brought into view. Even Justin Martyr, before the period of ecclesiastical corruption, by his fondness for Plato adulterated the gospel in some degree, as we have observed particularly in the article of free-will. Tatian, his scholar, went bolder lengths, and deserved the name of heretic. He dealt largely in the merits of continence and chastity ; and these virtues, pushed into extravagant excesses, under the notion of superior purity,

became great engines of self-righteousness and superstition; obscured men's views of the faith of Christ, and darkened the whole face of Christianity. Under the fostering hand of Ammonius and his followers, this fictitious holiness, disguised under the appearance of eminent sanctity, was formed into a system; and it soon began to generate the worst of evils. That man is altogether fallen,—that he is to be justified wholly by the faith of Christ,—that his atonement and mediation alone procure us access to God and eternal life,—that holiness is the proper work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man, and that for its production Divine Grace is absolutely necessary;—these,—and if there be any other similar evangelical truths,—as it was not possible to mix them with Platonism, faded gradually in the church, and were at length partly denied and partly forgotten.

And here we close the view of the second century; which, for the most part, exhibited proofs of divine grace as strong, or nearly so, as the first. We have seen the same unshaken and simple faith of Jesus, the same love of God and of the brethren; and,—that in which they singularly excelled modern Christians,—the same heavenly spirit and victory over the world. But a dark shade is enveloping these divine glories. The Spirit of God is grieved already by the ambitious intrusions of self-righteousness, argumentative refinements, and Pharisaic pride; and though it be more common to represent the most sensible decay of godliness as commencing a century later, to me it seems already begun. The surviving effects, however, of the first Effusion of the Spirit, and also the effects of some rich additional communications of the same Spirit, will appear in the third century.

CENTURY III.

I.—IRENÆUS, TERTULLIAN, PANTÆNUS, AND CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

BEFORE we proceed with the orderly course of events in this century, it may be convenient to continue the account of authors who properly belonged to the last, though they survived the conclusion of it. We meet with four celebrated characters of this description; Irenæus, Tertullian, Pantænus, and Clement of Alexandria.

Of Irenæus it were to be wished we had a more copious account: the place of his birth is quite uncertain. His name, however, points him out to be a Grecian. His instructors in Christianity were Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, and the renowned Polycarp. The former is generally allowed to have been a man of real sanctity, but of slender capacity. He, as well as Polycarp, had been a disciple of St. John; and, with all the imbecility of judgment which is ascribed to him, might, under God, have been of signal service to Irenæus. The instructions of Polycarp, however, seem to have made the deepest impressions on his mind from early life.

The church of Lyons, we have seen, was a daughter of the church of Smyrna, or of the other neighbouring churches. Pothinus, the bishop, must have been a

Greek as well as Irenæus; who, as presbyter, assisted the venerable prelate in his old age. After the death of Pothinus, about the year 169, Irenæus succeeded him. Never was any pastor more severely tried by a tempestuous scene. Violent persecution without, and subtle heresies within, called for the exertion, at once, of consummate dexterity and of magnanimous resolution. Irenæus was favoured with a large measure of both; and he weathered out the storm. But heresy proved a more constant enemy than persecution. The multiplication of it, in endless refinements, induced him to write his book against heresies, which must have been at that time a very seasonable work. His vigour and charity also in settling the insignificant disputes about Easter, as well as his share in writing the account of the martyrdoms of Lyons, have already been mentioned.

The beginning of the third century was marked with the persecution under Septimus Severus, the successor of Julian. Severus himself had, most probably, directed the persecution at Lyons, in which Pothinus suffered; and when he began to persecute as emperor, he would naturally recall the idea of Lyons, and of the persecution in which he had had so large a share. Gregory of Tours, and the ancient martyrologists inform us, 'that after several torments Irenæus was put to death, and together with him almost all the Christians of that populous city, whose numbers could not be reckoned, so that the streets of Lyons flowed with the blood of Christians.' We may easily allow that this is a rhetorical exaggeration. Yet I see no reason with some to deny altogether the truth of this second persecution at Lyons, or of Irenæus suffering martyrdom under it. Gregory of Tours is not the best authority, but there is no circumstance of improbability here. The silence of Eusebius affords no argument to the contrary, because he is far from relating the deaths of all cele-

brated Christians. Of those in the west particularly, he is by no means copious in his narrative ; and the natural cruelty of Severus, added to his former connexion with Lyons, gives to the fact a strong degree of credibility.

The labours of Irenæus in Gaul were doubtless of the most solid utility. Nor is it a small instance of the humility and charity of this great man, accurately versed as he was in Grecian literature, that he took pains to learn the barbarous dialect of Gaul, conformed himself to the rustic manners of an illiterate people, and renounced the politeness and elegant traits of his own country, for the love of souls. Rare fruit of Christian charity ! and highly worthy the attention of pastors in an age like this, in which so many undertake to preach Christianity ; and yet seem little desirous of distinguishing themselves in what peculiarly belongs to their office.

His book of heresies is nearly the whole of his writings that have escaped the injuries of time. His assiduity and penetration are equally remarkable in analyzing and dissecting all the fanciful schemes, with which heretics had disgraced the Christian name. It is easy to notice that his views of the gospel are of the same cast as those of Justin, whom he quotes, and with whose works he appears to have been acquainted. Like him he is silent, or nearly so, on the election of grace ; which from the instructors of his early age he must often have heard : and, like him, he defends the Arminian notion of free-will ; and by similar arguments. His philosophy seems to have had its usual influence on the mind, in darkening some truths of scripture, and in mixing the doctrine of Christ with human inventions.

There is not much of pathetic, practical, or experimental religion in the work. The plan of the author, which led him to keep up a constant attention to speculative errors, afforded it no opportunities or incitements. Yet there is every where so serious

and grave a spirit, and now and then such displays of godliness, as show him very capable of writing what might have been singularly useful to the church in all ages.

We have not yet had any occasion to take notice of the state of Christianity in the Roman province of Africa. This whole region, once the scene of Carthaginian greatness, abounded with Christians in the second century, though of the manner of the introduction of the gospel, and of the proceedings of its first planters we have no account. In the latter part of the second, and in the former part of the third century, there flourished at Carthage the famous Tertullian, the first Latin writer of the church whose works are come down to us. Yet were it not for some light which he throws on the state of Christianity in his own times, he would scarcely deserve to be distinctly noticed. I have seldom seen so large a collection of tracts, all professedly on Christian subjects, containing so little matter of useful instruction. The very first tract in the volume, namely, that *de Pallio*, shows the littleness of his views. The dress of the Roman *Toga* offended him. He exhorted Christians to wear the *Pallium*, a more vulgar and rustic kind of garment, and therefore more becoming their religion. All his writings betray the same sour, monastic, harsh, and severe turn of mind. “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” might seem to have been the maxims of his religious conduct. The apostle Paul, in the chapter alluded to, warns Christians against “will-worship and voluntary humility,” and shows that while the flesh outwardly appears to be humbled, it is inwardly puffed up by these things, and induced to forsake the head, Christ Jesus. This subtile spirit of self-righteousness may, in all likelihood, in Tertullian’s time, have very much overspread the African church, otherwise his writings would scarcely have rendered him so celebrated amongst them.

All his religious ideas seem tinged deeply with the same train of thinking. His treatise of repentance is meagre and dismal throughout ; and while it enlarges on outward things, and recommends prostration of our bodies before the priests, is very slight on the essential spirit of repentance itself.

A Christian soldier, who had refused to wear a crown of laurel which his commander had given him with the rest of his regiment, was punished for the disobedience, and was also blamed by the Christians of those times, because his conduct had a tendency to irritate needlessly the reigning powers. I am apt to think that he might have worn it as innocently as St. Paul committed himself to a ship whose sign was Castor and Pollux. It was a military ornament merely, and could no more be said to have any connexion with idolatry than almost every custom of civil life must have had at that time. The apostle, I think, would have concurred in disapproving the soldier's want of obedience to his lawful superiors ; and he might have referred Christians to his own determination in the case of eating things sacrificed to idols,—“ Eat of such things as they set before you, asking no questions for conscience sake.” But Tertullian decides on the other side of the question, and applauds the disobedience of the soldier. His reasons are dishonourable to his understanding. He owns that there is no scripture to be found against compliance in this case. Tradition he thinks a sufficient reason for contumacy ; and then he proceeds to relate some traditional customs maintained in the African churches, among which the very frequent signing of themselves with the sign of the cross is one.

Superstition, it seems, had made deeper inroads into Africa. It was rather an unpolished region : certainly much inferior to Italy in point of civilization. Satan's temptations are suited to tempers and situations. But surely it was not by superstitious

practices that the glad tidings of salvation had been first introduced into Africa. There must have been a deep decline. One of the strongest proofs that the comparative value of the Christian religion in different countries is not to be estimated by their distance from the apostolic age, is deducible from the times of Tertullian.

I shall close the account of Tertullian with a few facts taken from his address to Scapula, the persecuting governor, without any remarks.

Claudius Herminianus, in Cappadocia, was vexed because his wife was become a servant of Christ, and for that reason he treated the Christians cruelly. Being eaten with worms, 'Let no one,' says he, 'know it, lest the Christians rejoice.' Afterward, convinced of his error in having, by force of torments, caused persons to abjure Christianity, he died almost a Christian himself.

At Thistrum, Cincius Severus himself taught Christians how to answer so as to obtain their dismissal.

Asper, having moderately tortured a person and brought him to submit, would not compel him to sacrifice; and he made a public declaration among the advocates, 'that he was grieved that he had any thing to do with such a cause.'

The emperor Severus himself was, in one part of his life, kind to the Christians. Proculus, a Christian, had cured him of a disorder by the use of a certain oil, and he kept him in his palace to his death. This man was well known to Caracalla, the successor of Severus, whose nurse was a Christian. Even some persons of the highest quality, of both sexes, were openly protected by Severus against the raging populace.

Arrius Antoninus, in Asia, persecuted so vehemently, that all the Christians of the state presented themselves in a body. He ordered a few of them to be put to death, and dismissed the rest, saying, 'If

you wish to die, wretched men, ye may find precipices and halters.'

One of the most respectable cities within the precincts of the Roman empire was Alexandria, the metropolis of Egypt. Here the gospel had been planted by St. Mark ; and from the considerable success which had attended it in most capital towns, it is probable that many persons were converted. But of the first pastors of this church, and of the work of God among them, we have no account. Our more distinct information begins with what is evil. The Platonic philosophers ruled the taste of this city, which piqued itself on its superior erudition. Ammonius Saccas had, as we have seen, reduced there the notions of the learned into system, which pretended to embrace all sorts of sentiments ; and his successors, for several ages, followed his plan. We are told, that from St. Mark's time, a Christian catechetical school was supported in Alexandria. Whether it be so or not, Pantænus is the first master of it of whom we have any account. It should seem, from a passage of Eusebius, that he was a Hebrew by descent. By tradition he had received the true doctrine from Peter, James, John, and Paul ; and, no doubt, he deserved this testimony of Eusebius, notwithstanding the unhappy mixture of philosophy which he imbibed in this region. For Pantænus was much addicted to the sect of the Stoics, a sort of romantic pretenders to perfection, which doctrine flattered human pride, but was surely ill adapted to our natural imbecility, and to scriptural views of innate depravity. The combination of Stoicism with Christianity in the system of Pantænus must have very much debased the sacred truths ; and we may be assured that those who were disposed to follow implicitly the dictates of such an instructor, must have been furnished by him with a clouded light of the gospel ; still, it is not improbable but that many *of the simple and illiterate Christians might happily*

escape the infection, and preserve, unadulterated, the genuine simplicity of the faith of Christ. The bait of reasoning pride lays more in the way of the learned; and in all ages they are more prone to be caught by it.

Pantænus always retained the title of the Stoic philosopher, after he had been admitted to eminent employments in the Christian church. For ten years he laboriously discharged the office of catechist, and freely taught all that desired him: whereas the school of his predecessors had been more private.

Certain Indian ambassadors, it is not easy to determine from what part of India they came, intreated Demetrius, then Bishop of Alexandria, to send them some worthy person to preach the faith of Jesus in their country. Pantænus was chosen, and the hardships he must have endured were doubtless great. But there were at that time many evangelists, who had the apostolical spirit to propagate the faith at the hazard of their lives. And as Pantænus very freely complied with this call, we have here one of the best proofs of his being possessed of the spirit of the gospel. His labours among ignorant Indians, where neither fame, nor ease, nor profit, were attainable, appear to me much more substantial proofs of his godliness, than any which can be drawn from his catechetical employments at Alexandria. The former would oblige him to attend chiefly to Christian fundamentals, and could afford little opportunity of indulging the philosophic spirit. We are told he found in India the gospel of St. Matthew, which had been carried thither by the apostle Bartholemew, who had first preached among them. I mention this, but much doubt the truth of it. Of the particular success of his labours we have no account. He lived to return to Alexandria, and resumed his catechetical office. He died not long after the commencement of the third century. He wrote but little. Some commentaries on the scriptures are all that

are mentioned as his, and of them not a fragment remains.

Candour, I think, requires us to look on him as a sincere Christian, whose fruitfulness was yet much checked by that very philosophy for which Eusebius so highly commends him. A blasting wind it surely was; but it did not entirely destroy Christian vegetation in all whom it infected. Let us now turn our eyes to his disciple, from whom we may collect more clearly what the master was, because we have more evidence concerning him. But the Christian reader must be prepared to expect a declension in divine things, in the state of the Church before us.

Clemens Alexandrinus was, by his own confession, a scholar of Pantænus, and of the same philosophical cast of mind. He was of the eclectic sect. It is sincerely to be regretted that Clemens had any acquaintance with them: for so far as he mixed their notions with Christianity, so far he tarnished it: and though we may admit, that by his zeal, activity, learning, and reputation, he did good to many in instructing and inducing them to receive the fundamentals of the divine religion, it is nevertheless not to be denied that he clouded the pure light of the gospel:—Let us hear himself: ‘I espouse neither this nor that philosophy, neither the Stoic nor the Platonic, nor the Epicurean, nor that of Aristotle; but whatever any of these sects hath said, that is fit and just, whatever teaches righteousness with a divine and religious knowledge, all this I select; and call it philosophy.’

Is it not hence very evident, that from the time that this philosophizing spirit had entered into the church through Justin, it had procured to itself a respect to which its merits no way entitled it? For, what is there even of good ethics in all the philosophers, which Clemens might not have learnt in the New Testament; and much more perfectly, and without the danger of pernicious adulterations? Doubtless,

many valuable purposes are answered by an acquaintance with these writers; but to dictate to us in religion, Clemens should have known, was no part of their business. "The world by wisdom knew not God." "Beware of philosophy." The Christian world was now gradually learning to neglect these scriptural cautions, and divine knowledge is certainly much too high a term for any human doctrine whatever.

He succeeded his master Pantænus in the catechetical school, and under him were bred the famous Origen, Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, and other eminent men. I read the following passage of Clemens with no pleasure: 'As the husbandman first waters the soil, and then casts in his seed, so the notions which I derive out of the writings of the Gentiles serve first to water and soften the earthly parts of the soul, that the spiritual seed may be the better cast in, and take vital root in the minds of men.'

This, certainly, is not a Christian dialect: the Apostles neither placed Gentile philosophy in the foundation, nor believed that it would at all assist in raising the superstructure of Christianity. On the contrary, they looked on the philosophical religion of their own times as so much rubbish; but, in all ages, the blandishments of mere reason on such subjects deceive us;—"VAIN MAN WOULD BE WISE."

Besides his employment in the office of Catechist, he was made Presbyter in the church of Alexandria. During the persecution under Severus, most probably he visited the East, and had a peculiar intimacy with Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, who seems to have been a holy man. This last suffered imprisonment for the faith; and in that situation he wrote a letter to the church of Antioch, which was conveyed by Clemens. Something of the spirit of Christianity appears in the fragment of this letter. 'Alexander, a servant of God, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ, to

the blessed church at Antioch, in the Lord, greeting. Our Lord has made my bonds, in this time of my imprisonment, light and easy to me; while I understood that Asclepiades, a person admirably qualified by his eminency in the faith, was, by divine providence, become bishop of your holy church of Antioch. These letters, brethren, I have sent you by Clemens the blessed Presbyter, a man of approved integrity, whom you both do know already, and shall still further know: he hath been here with us according to the good will of God, and hath much established and augmented the church of Christ.' From Jerusalem, Clemens went to Antioch, and afterwards returned to his charge at Alexandria. The time of his death is uncertain.

The mystic philosophy, to which he was so much addicted, would naturally darken his views of some of the most precious truths of the Gospel. In particular, the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ will always suffer from a connexion of this kind: human philosophical doctrines admit no righteousness but what is a man's own.—There is, notwithstanding, good proof of the solid piety of this learned man. Little is known of his life; but his religious taste and spirit may be collected from his writings.

II.—THE STATE OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGNS OF SEVERUS AND CARACALLA.

It seemed proper to preface the general history of the third century by a brief review of the lives of the four persons just mentioned, partly because they were studious men, not very much connected with the public state of Christianity; and partly because the knowledge of their views and taste in religion may prepare the reader to expect that unhappy mixture of philosophical self-righteousness and superstition, which much clouded and depraved the pure light of the gospel in this century.

Severus, though in his younger days a bitter persecutor of Christians at Lyons, was yet, through the influence of the kindness which he had received from Proculus, favourably disposed toward the Christians for a considerable time. It was not till about the tenth year of his reign, which falls in with the year 202, that his native ferocity of temper broke out afresh, and kindled a very severe persecution against the Christians. He was just returned from the East victorious; and the pride of prosperity induced him to forbid the propagation of the gospel. Christians still thought it right to obey God rather than man. Severus persisted; and exercised the usual cruelties. The persecution raged everywhere, but particularly at Alexandria. From various parts of Egypt the Christians were brought thither to suffer; and they expired in torments. Leonidas, father of the famous Origen, was beheaded; so easy a death, however, was esteemed a favour. His son was then very young, but the account, which is given of him by Eusebius, deserves our notice.

Lætus was at that time governor of Alexandria, and of the rest of Egypt; and Demetrius had been recently elected bishop of the Christians in that city. Great numbers now suffering martyrdom, young Origen panted for the honour, and needlessly exposed himself to danger. His mother checked the imprudent zeal at first by earnest entreaties; but perceiving that he still was bent on suffering with his father, who at that time was closely confined, she very properly exercised her motherly authority by confining him to the house, and by hiding from him all his apparel. The vehement spirit of Origen prompted him, when he could do nothing else, to write a letter to his father, in which he thus exhorted him: ‘Father, faint not; and don’t be concerned on our account.’ He had been carefully trained in the study of the scriptures under the inspection of his pious father, who, together with the study of the

liberal arts, had particularly superintended this most important part of education. Before he introduced his son to any material exercises in profane learning, he instructed him in the scriptures, and gave him, daily, a certain task out of them to repeat. The penetrating genius of Origen led him, in the course of his employment, to investigate the sense of scripture, and to ask his father questions beyond his ability to solve. The father checked his curiosity, reminded him of his imbecility, and admonished him to be content with the plain grammatical sense of scripture, which obviously offered itself; but inwardly rejoiced, it seems, that God had given him such a son. And it would not have been amiss, if he had rejoiced with trembling; perhaps he did so; and Origen's early loss of such a father, who, probably, was more simple in Christian faith and piety than he himself ever was, might be an extreme disadvantage to him.

We seem to discover, in the very beginning of Origen, the foundation of that presumptuous spirit which led him afterwards to philosophize so dangerously in the Christian religion, and never to content himself with plain truth, but to hunt after something singular and extraordinary; though it must be acknowledged his sincere desire of serving God appeared from early life; nor does it ever seem to have forsaken him, so that he may be considered as having been a child of God from early years.

His father dying a martyr, he was left, with his mother and other six children, an orphan aged seventeen years. His father's substance was confiscated by the emperor, and the family reduced to great distress. But Providence gave him a friend in a rich and godly matron, who yet supported in her house a certain person of Antioch, that was noted for heresy. We cannot, at this distance of time, assign her motives; but Origen, though obliged to be in the company of the heretic, could not be per-

vailed on to join in prayer with him. He now vigorously applied himself to the improvement of his understanding; and having no more work at school,—it seems, because he soon acquired all the learning his master could give him,—and finding that the business of catechising was deserted at Alexandria because of the persecution, he undertook the work himself; and several Gentiles came to hear him, and became his disciples. He was now in the eighteenth year of his age; and in the heat of the persecution he distinguished himself by his attachment to the martyrs, not only to those of his acquaintance, but in general to all who suffered for Christianity. He visited such of them as were fettered in deep dungeons and close imprisonment; and was present with them even after their condemnation, and boldly attended them to the place of execution: he openly embraced and saluted them, and was once in imminent danger of being stoned to death on this account. Indeed, he was repeatedly in peril of his life; for the persecution daily prevailed; and he could no longer pass safely through the streets of Alexandria. He often changed his lodgings, but was every where pursued; and, humanly speaking, it seemed impossible for him to escape. His instructions, however, and his zeal, produced great effects; multitudes crowded to hear him; and were, by his labours, incited to attend to Christianity.

The charge of the school was now, by Demetrius the bishop, committed to him alone: and he converted it wholly into a school of religious instruction. He maintained himself by the sale of the profane books which he had been wont to study. Thus he lived many years, an amazing monument, at once both of industry and of self-denial. Not only the day, but the greater part of the night, was by him devoted to religious study; and he practised, with literal conscientiousness, our Lord's rules, of not having two coats, nor two pairs of shoes, and

of not providing for futurity. He was inured to cold, nakedness, and poverty: he offended many by his unwillingness to receive their gratuities. He abstained from wine; and, in general, lived so abstemiously as to endanger his life. Many persons imitated his excessive austerities; and were, at that time, honoured with the name of philosophers; and some of them patiently suffered martyrdom.

One of his scholars, called Plutarch, was led to martyrdom. Origen accompanied him to the place of execution. The odium of the scholar's sufferings reflected on the master; and it was not without a peculiar providence that he escaped the vengeance of the citizens. After him Serenus suffered by fire; the third martyr was Heraclides; the fourth Heron. The former had not yet been baptized, being only what was called a Catechumen; the latter had been lately baptized, but both were beheaded. A second Serenus, of the same school, having sustained great torments and much pain, was beheaded. A woman also, called Rais, as yet a Catechumen, suffered death. Potamiæna, a young woman remarkable for beauty, purity of mind, and firmness in the faith of Christ, suffered very dreadful torments: she was scourged very severely by the order of Aquila the judge, who threatened to deliver her to be abused by the basest characters. But she remained firm in the faith; was led to the fire and burned, together with her mother Marcella. The heart of Basilides, a soldier, who presided at her execution, was softened. He pitied her, treated her courteously, and protected her, so far as he durst, from the insolence of the mob. She acknowledged his kindness, thanked him, and promised that after her departure she would entreat the Lord for him. Scalding pitch was poured on her whole body, which she sustained in much patience. Sometime after, Basilides, being required by his fellow-soldiers to swear profanely on a certain occasion, he refused, and confessed himself

a Christian. They disbelieved him at first ; but finding him serious, they carried him before the judge, who remanded him to prison. The Christians visited him ; and upon being questioned as to the cause of his sudden change, he declared that Potamiæna, three days after her martyrdom, had appeared to him by night, and informed him that she had performed her promise, and that he should shortly die. After this he suffered martyrdom.

The reader will think this an extraordinary story : it is tinged with superstition, no doubt ; but who can venture, without meriting the imputation of temerity, to reject it altogether as a fiction ? Eusebius lived at no great distance from the time of Origen : he had made accurate inquiries after him and his followers in Alexandria ; and he observes that the fame of Potamiæna was in his own time very great in that province. Her martyrdom and that of the soldier seem sufficiently authentic. The supposition of a dream removes all the difficulty ; and the more easily, when we recollect that the man's mind could not fail to have been previously under a strong impression of the person of the sufferer, of her late martyrdom, and of the circumstances which attended it.

But it is time to turn from Alexandria to other parts of the Roman empire ; and to see what effects were produced by this same persecution of Severus.

Alexander, a bishop in Cappadocia, confessed the faith of Christ, and sustained a variety of sufferings ; and yet by the providence of God was at length delivered : and he travelled afterwards to Jerusalem. There he was joyfully received by Narcissus the very aged bishop of that see, a man of extraordinary piety, who associated Alexander with him in the labours of Christian instruction. Some epistles of the latter were extant in Eusebius's time, who gave us a short fragment of one of them, sufficiently authenticating the fact, that those two holy men were joint pastors of Jerusalem.

‘Narcissus greets you, who governed this bishopric before me; and now being an hundred and sixteen years old, prayeth with me, and that very seriously, for the state of the church, and beseeches you to be of one mind with me.’

If the ancient martyrologies had been preserved uncorrupted, they would, doubtless, afford us useful materials, and illustrate much the spirit and genius of real Christianity in its primitive professors. But frauds, interpolations, and impostures, are endless: The papal and monastic superstitions in after-ages, induced their supporters to corrupt these martyrologies, and indeed the writings of the fathers in general. The difficulty of procuring materials for a well-connected credible history of real Christians, is hence increased exceedingly. What I cannot believe, I shall not take the trouble to transcribe; what I can, where the matter appears worthy of memory, shall be exhibited. This is the case of the martyrs of Scillita, a city of Africa, in the province of Carthage. The narration is simple, credible throughout, and worthy of the purest ages of the Gospel. —The facts belong to the times of Severus.

‘Twelve persons were brought before Saturninus the proconsul at Carthage, the chief of whom were Speratus, Narzal, and Cittin; and three women, Donata, Secunda and Vestina. When they came before him, he said to them all, ‘You may expect the emperor our master’s pardon, if you return to your senses, and observe the ceremonies of our gods.’ To which Speratus replied, ‘We have never been guilty of any thing that is evil, nor been partakers of injustice: we have even prayed for those who persecute us unjustly; in which we obey our EMPEROR, who prescribed to us this rule of behaviour.’ Saturninus answered, ‘We have also a religion that is simple: we swear by the genius of the emperors, and we offer up vows for their health, which you ought also to do. Speratus answered, ‘If you will hear me patiently, I

will declare unto you the mystery of Christian simplicity.' The proconsul said, ' Shall I hear you speak ill of our ceremonies? Rather swear, all of you, by the genius of the emperors our masters, that you may enjoy the pleasures of life.' Speratus answered, ' I know not the genius of the emperors. I serve God, who is in heaven, whom no man has seen, nor can see. I have never been guilty of any crime punishable by the public laws: if I buy any thing, I pay the duties to the collectors: I acknowledge my God and Saviour to be the Supreme Governor of all nations: I have made no complaints against any person; and therefore they ought to make none against me.' The proconsul, turning to the rest, said, ' Do not ye imitate the folly of this mad wretch; but rather fear our prince and obey his commands.' Citten answered, ' We fear only the Lord our God, who is in heaven.' The proconsul then said,—' Let them be carried to prison, and put in fetters till to-morrow.'

The next day the proconsul, seated on his tribunal, caused them to be brought before him, and said to the women,—' Honour our prince, and do sacrifice to the gods.' Donata replied, ' We honour Cæsar as Cæsar; but to God we offer prayer and worship.' Vestina said, ' I also am a Christian.' Secunda said, ' I also believe in my God, and will continue steadfast to him; and, in regard to your gods, we will not serve and adore them.' The proconsul ordered them to be separated; then, having called for the men, he said to Speratus, ' Perseverest thou in being a Christian?' Speratus answered, ' Yes, I do persevere:— Let all give ear, I am a Christian;' which being heard by the rest, they said, ' We also are Christians.' The proconsul said, ' You will neither consider your danger, nor receive mercy.' They replied, ' Do what you please, we shall die joyfully for the sake of Jesus Christ.' The proconsul asked, ' What books are those which you read and revere?' Speratus replied, ' The four Gospels of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;

the Epistles of the Apostle St. Paul, and all the Scripture that is inspired of God.' The proconsul said, 'I will give you three days to reflect and to come to yourselves.' Upon which Speratus answered, 'I am a Christian, and such are all those who are with me: and we will never quit the faith of our Lord Jesus. Do, therefore, what you think fit.'

The proconsul, seeing their resolution, pronounced sentence against them, - that they should die by the hands of the executioner, in these terms:—'Speratus and the rest, having acknowledged themselves to be Christians, and having refused to pay due honour to the emperor, I command their heads to be cut off.' This sentence having been read, Speratus and his fellow-sufferers said, 'We give thanks to God, who honoureth us this day with being received as martyrs in heaven, for confessing his name.' They were carried to the place of punishment, where they fell on their knees all together, and having again given thanks to Jesus Christ, they were beheaded.

At Carthage itself four young catechumens were seized, Revocatus and Felicitas, slaves to the same master, with Saturninus and Secundulus; and also Vivia Perpetua, a lady of quality. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom one was a catechumen: she was about twenty-two years of age; was married, and was then pregnant; and moreover, she had a young child at her breast. To these five, by an excess of zeal too common at that time, Satur voluntarily joined himself. While they were in the hands of the persecutors, the father of Perpetua, himself a pagan, but full of affection to his favourite offspring, importuned her to fall from the faith. His intreaties were vain. Her pious constancy appeared to him an absurd obstinacy, and enraged him so much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. For a few days, while these catechumens were under guard, but not confined in the prison, they found means to be baptized; and

Perpetua's prayers were directed particularly for patience under bodily pains. They were then put into a dark prison. To the rest, who had been more accustomed to hardships, this change of scene had not any thing in it very terrible. To her, who had experienced nothing but the delicacies of genteel life, it was peculiarly formidable and distressing: her concern for her infant was extreme. Tertius and Pomponius, two deacons of the church, obtained by money, that the prisoners might go out of the dark dungeon, and for some hours refresh themselves in a more commodious place, where Perpetua gave the breast to her infant, and then recommended him carefully to her mother. For some time her mind was oppressed with concern for the misery she had brought on her family; though it was for the sake of a good conscience; but she grew more composed, and her prison became a palace.

Her father, some time after, came to the prison overwhelmed with grief; which, in all probability, was augmented by the reflections he had made on his own rough and angry behaviour to her at their last interview. 'Have pity, my daughter,' says he, 'on my grey hairs; have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name, if I myself have brought you up to this age; if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind: respect your father and your aunt,—these, it seems, were joined in the interests of paganism, while the mother appears to have been a Christian, otherwise his silence concerning her seems scarcely to be accounted for,—'have compassion on your son, who cannot survive you: lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all: for if you perish we must all of us shut our mouths in disgrace.' The old gentleman, with much tenderness, kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping and calling her no longer his daughter, but his mistress—the mistress of his fate! He was the only person

of the family who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. Perpetua, though inwardly torn with filial affection, could offer him no other comfort than to desire him to acquiesce in the Divine disposal.

The next day they were all brought into the court, and examined in the presence of vast crowds. There the unhappy old man appeared with his little grandson, and taking Perpetua aside, conjured her to have some pity on her child. The procurator, Hilarian, joined in the suit, but in vain. The old man then attempted to draw his daughter from the scaffold. Hilarian ordered him to be beaten; and a blow, which he received with a staff, was felt by Perpetua very severely.

Hilarian condemned them to be exposed to the wild beasts. They then returned cheerfully to their prison. Perpetua sent the deacon, Pomponius, to demand her child of her father, which he refused to return. The health of the child, we are told, suffered not; nor did Perpetua feel any bodily inconvenience.

Secondulus died in prison. Felicitas was eight months gone with child; and seeing the day of the public shows to be near, she was much afflicted lest her execution should take place before her delivery. Her companions joined in prayer for her three days before the spectacles; and she was, with great difficulty, delivered of a child. One of the door-keepers, who, perhaps, expected to have found in her a stoical insensibility, and heard her cries, said, ‘Do you complain of this? what will you do when you are exposed to the beasts?’ Felicitas answered, with a sagacity truly Christian, ‘It is I that suffer now, but then there will be another with me, that will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for his sake.’—Her new-born daughter was delivered to a Christian woman, who nursed it as her own.

The tribune appears to have credited a report, that the prisoners would free themselves by magical practices; and in consequence, to have treated them

roughly. ‘Why don’t you,’ says Perpetua, ‘give us some relief?’ Will it not be for your honour that we should appear well fed at the spectacles?’

This address of hers had the desired effect: it procured a very agreeable alteration in their treatment. On the day before the shows, they were supplied with their last meal; and the martyrs did their utmost to convert it into an *αγανη*, a *love-feast*: they ate in public: their brethren and others were allowed to visit them: and the keeper of the prison himself, by this time, was converted to the faith: they talked to the people, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come: they pointed out to them their own happy lot, and smiled at the curiosity of those who ran to see them. ‘Observe well our faces,’ cries Satur, with much animation, ‘that ye may know them at the day of judgment.’

The Spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial: joy, rather than fear, was painted on their looks. Perpetua, cherished by Jesus Christ, went on with a composed countenance and an easy pace, holding down her eyes, lest the spectators might draw wrong conclusions from their vivacity. Some idolatrous garments were offered them by the pagans: ‘We sacrifice our lives,’ said they, ‘to avoid every thing of this kind.—The tribune desisted from his demand.’

Perpetua sang, as already victorious: and Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satur, endeavoured to affect the people with the fear of the wrath to come. Being come into Hilarian’s presence, ‘Thou judgest us,’ said they, ‘and God shall judge thee.’ The mob was enraged, and insisted on their being scourged before they were exposed to the beasts. It was done, and the martyrs rejoiced in being conformed to their Saviour’s sufferings.

Perpetua and Felicitas were stripped, and put into the nets, and exposed to a wild cow. The spectators were shocked at the sight: for the one was an

accomplished beauty, and the other had been recently delivered of a child. The assisting executioner drew them back, and covered them with loose garments. Perpetua was first attacked; and falling backwards she put herself into a reclining posture; and seeing her habit torn by her side, she retired to cover herself: she then gathered up her hair, that she might seem less disordered: she raised herself up, and seeing Felicitas bruised, she gave her her hand and lifted her up: then they went toward the gate, where Perpetua was received by a catechumen, called Rusticus, who attended her: 'I wonder,' said she, 'when they will expose us to the cow;'—she had been, it seems, insensible of what had passed, nor could believe it, till she saw on her body and clothes the marks of her sufferings. She caused her brother to be called, and addressing herself to him and Rusticus, she said, 'Continue firm in the faith; love one another; and be neither frightened nor offended at our sufferings.'

The people insisted on having the martyrs brought into the midst of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleasure of seeing them die: some of them rose up and went forward of their own accord, after having given one another the kiss of charity: others received the last blow without speaking or stirring. Perpetua fell into the hands of an unskilful gladiator, who pierced her between the ribs so as to give her much unnecessary pain. She cried out; and then she herself guided his trembling hand to her throat: and thus with the rest she slept in Jesus.

Augustine, in his exposition of the forty-seventh Psalm, takes notice of the victorious strength of divine love prevailing over all natural affections, and produces this same Perpetua as an example: 'We know and read thus in the sufferings of the blessed Perpetua.' He mentions the same story also in three other places in his Treatise of the Soul. But *it is evident* that he doubts whether Perpetua herself

wrote what is ascribed to her. If so, we may well doubt, and more than doubt, the truth of the visions with which this excellent narrative has been intermixed; and with which I have not thought it worth while to trouble the reader. Yet the general history has every mark of authenticity. Augustine himself published three sermons on the anniversary of the martyrs. It is much to be regretted that the finest monuments of ecclesiastical antiquity have been thus tarnished by mixtures of fraud or superstition. The authority of Augustine has enabled me to distinguish with some degree of precision the truth from the falsehood. My business does not call me to recite the frauds; and it will be needless to add further remarks: the pious reader sees, with pleasure, that God was yet present with his people.—Indeed the power of God appeared evidently displayed during the course of this dreadful persecution, by the sudden and amazing conversions of several persons who voluntarily suffered death for that doctrine which they before detested. Of this we have the very respectable testimony of Origen, who, whatever other defects he be justly charged with, is certainly allowed to be of unquestionable veracity.

Severus would naturally extend this persecution to Gaul, the scene of his former cruelties. In fact, it was now that Irenæus suffered, and many more suffered with him; and Lyons was once more dyed with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Vivarius and Androlus, who had been sent by Polycarp there to preach the gospel, were put to death. At Comana, in Pamphylia, Zoticus the bishop, who had distinguished himself by writing against the Montanists, obtained the crown of martyrdom.

At this trying season it was that some churches purchased their peace and quiet by paying money, not only to the magistrates, but also to the informers and soldiers who were appointed to search them out.

The pastors of the churches approved of this proceeding, because it was only suffering the loss of their goods, and preferring that to the endangering of their lives. However casuists may decide this question, it is easily conceivable that the practice might take place with many in real uprightness of heart.

It is usual with God to moderate the sufferings of his people, and not to suffer them to be tried by persecution at once very long and very violent. In the year 211, after a reign of eighteen years, the tyrant Severus died; and the church found repose and tranquillity under his son and successor Caracalla, though a monster of wickedness.

Divine Providence had long before prepared for the Christians this mitigation of trial, in the circumstances of Caracalla's education. He had known Proculus the Christian, who had recovered the health of his father, and was maintained in his palace to his death; and he had himself been nursed, when an infant, by a Christian woman. Though this could not win his heart to Jesus Christ, it gave him an early predilection in favour of Christians, insomuch that when he was seven years of age, observing one of his play-fellows to be beaten because he followed the Christian religion, he could not, for some time after, behold with patience either his own father or the father of the boy. Certainly few men have ever exceeded him in the ferocious vices; yet, during the six years and two months which he reigned, the Christians found in him friendship and protection. Indeed, for the space of thirty and eight years,—from the death of Severus to the reign of Decius,—if we except the short turbulent interval of Maximinus, the church enjoyed a continual calm. About the year 210, Origen came to Rome, where Zephyrinus was bishop, desirous of visiting that ancient church, but soon returned to Alexandria, and to his office of catechising. He entrusted to Heraclas, his associate in that employment, the instruction of the

more ignorant, while he himself took care of those who had made a greater proficiency. His active spirit induced him to study the Hebrew language; and the first fruit of his labour was the publication of the Hexapla. In this great work he gave the Hebrew text and the translations of the Septuagint, of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and two others, which had long been obsolete, and whose authors were unknown. Of these interpreters, Symmachus was an Ebionite; that is, he held that Christ was but a mere man; and he inveighed against the genuine gospel of St. Matthew for no other reason, that I can see, but on account of the clear testimony which the beginning of it affords against his heresy. These works of Origen, in addition to his constant diligence, both in writing and in preaching, are monuments at least of the most laudable industry. The evangelical reader would wish, no doubt, to see stronger signs of real Christian proficiency in experimental and practical religion; but we must be content with such matter as the ecclesiastical records afford us.

One Ambrose, addicted to the Valentinian heresy, an extremely fanciful and romantic scheme, not worthy of the reader's attention, found himself confuted by Origen, and was brought over to the church. Many learned men also felt the force of his argumentations. Heretics and philosophers attended his lectures; and he took, no doubt, a very excellent method to procure regard to himself at least; he instructed them in profane and secular learning. He confuted the opinions of the different sects by opposing them to each other; and he exposed the various fallacies with so much acuteness and sagacity, that he obtained among the Gentiles the reputation of a great philosopher. He encouraged many persons to study the liberal arts, assuring them, that they would, by that means, be much better furnished for the contemplation of the holy scriptures. He

was entirely of opinion, that secular and philosophical institutes were very necessary and profitable to his own mind. Does it escape the reader, how much in the course of the Christian annals, we are already departed, though by insensible degress, from Christian simplicity? Here is a man looked up to with reverence, at least by the eastern church, as a great luminary; a man, who, in his younger days, was himself a scholar of the amphibious Ammonius; who mixed together Christianity and Pagan philosophy, and who, by reading his motley lectures, drew over, in form at least, many of the heathen philosophers to embrace the religion of Jesus. These mention him often in their books, some dedicate their works to him; and others respectfully deliver them to him as their master. All this Eusebius tells us with much apparent satisfaction. To him the gospel seems to have triumphed over gentilism by these means. There is no doubt but, in a certain sense, Origen's success was great; but I much fear that, in return, the pure gospel suffered greatly by an admixture of gentilism.

There wanted not, however, some persons who found fault with Origen for all this attachment to pagan philosophy. Probably, simple, docile, ingenuous minds, which desired to be fed with the "sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby," found themselves starved amidst all this heterogeneous, inconsistent doctrine. He felt himself called upon to vindicate his practice: which he does, only by observing the use of philosophy in confuting heretics; and by the example of Pantænus, and of Heraclas, an Alexandrian pastor, his coadjutor, who formerly had worn the common dress, and afterwards took up the philosopher's garb, and still studied earnestly the writings of the heathen philosophers. What does all this prove but the destructive progress of this epidemical disease?

The governor of Arabia sent to Demetrius, desir-

ing instruction of Origen, who did not hesitate to undertake the necessary journey for that purpose; and he then returned back to Alexandria.

The vices and follies of Heliogabalus are infamous; but it does not appear that the church of God suffered on that account. He seems not to have conceived any particular prejudices against Christians; on the contrary, he expressed a desire of removing their rites of worship to Rome. It is not worth while to attempt an explanation of the views of so senseless a prince. He was slain at the age of eighteen, in the year 222, after he had swayed the sceptre three years and nine months. His cousin Alexander succeeded him; who was then only in the sixteenth year of his age, but was esteemed one of the best moral characters in profane history. His mother, Mammæa, is called by Eusebius a most godly and religious woman. I am at a loss to vindicate the expression. It does not appear that she received the faith of Christ; however, neither she, nor her son, persecuted, they rather approved and countenanced, the Christians. They were persons of candour and probity themselves, and they saw that, in morals at least, the people of God concurred with their own views. Their conduct was laudable; but, mark the mischief of blending philosophy with Christianity! How cheap is the term godly grown in the eyes of Eusebius!

The providence of God not only secured his church from suffering, but procured it a favourable patron in this princess and her son. The emperor had a domestic chapel, where, every morning, he worshipped those deceased princes, whose characters were most esteemed. Their statues were placed among those of the gods; and into this company he introduced Apollonius of Tyana, Jesus Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus. He had a desire to erect even a temple to Christ, and to receive him regularly into the number of the gods.

There are on record other instances of his conduct towards the Christians. The right of possessing certain piece of ground was claimed by a temple-keeper: it had been common for a long time and Christians had occupied it for a place of worship. 'It is fitter,' said Alexander, 'that God should be served there, in any manner whatever, rather than that it should be used for a tavern.' He frequently used this Christian sentence, 'Do as you would be done by.' He obliged a crier to repeat it when he punished any person; and was so fond of it, that he caused it to be written in his palace and in the public buildings. When he was going to appoint governors of provinces or other officers, he proposed their names in public, giving the people notice, that if they knew any crime to accuse them of, they should come forward and make it known, 'It would be a shame,' says he, 'not to do that with respect to governors who are entrusted with men's properties and lives, which is done by Jews and Christians when they publish the names of those whom they mean to condemn as priests.' And, indeed, by Origen's account, Christians were so very careful in the choice of their pastors, that the civil magistrates were by no means to be compared with them in probity and morality.

In the year 229, Alexander was obliged to return to the East, and to reside at Antioch. His mother Mammæa, went with him, and having heard of the fame of Origen, and being very curious to hear his sayings, she sent him a guard, and caused him to be brought to her. All the account we have of this interview is, that he continued there awhile, and published his sayings to the glory of God, and concerning the mysteries of the heavenly doctrine; and that he then returned to his school at Alexandria.

The liberality of his friend Ambrose enabled Origen to prosecute his scriptural studies with vast rapidity. Ambrose himself was a deacon of the church.

by his faithfulness under persecution, he obtained the name of confessor.

At this time Noctus of Smyrna propagated the same heresy in the east, which Praxeas had done in the west; namely, that there was no distinction among the divine Persons. The pastors of the church of Ephesus summoned him before them, and demanded whether he really maintained this opinion. At first he denied it: but afterwards, having formed a party, he became more bold, and publicly taught his heresy. Being again interrogated by the pastors, he said, 'What harm have I done? I glorify none but one God; I know none besides him who hath been begotten, who suffered and died.' He evidently, in this way, confounded the persons of the Father and the Son together; and being obstinate in his views, he was ejected out of the church with all his disciples. We have here an additional proof of the jealousy of the primitive Christians in support of the fundamental articles of Christianity. The connexion also indissolubly preserved between heretical pravity and pride of heart appeared in this teacher. He called himself Moses, and his brother, Aaron.

In the year 235, Alexander was murdered, together with his mother; and Maximin the murderer obtained the empire. His malice against the house of Alexander disposed him to persecute the Christians, and he gave orders to put to death the pastors of the churches. The persecution was not confined to them: others suffered at the same time; and it seems by Firmilian's letter to Cyprian of Carthage, that the flame extended to Cappadocia. Ambrose, the friend of Origen, and Protoctetus, minister of Cæsarea, suffered much in the course of it; and to them Origen dedicated his book of Martyrs. He himself was obliged to retire. But the tyrant's reign lasted only three years, in which time it must be confessed that the rest of the world had tasted of his ferocity as much as the Christians had. His perse-

cution of them was local, but his cruelty to mankind in general seemed to have no limits.

Papienus and Balbinus, the successors of Maximin, were slain in the year 238. Gordian reigned six years, and was then supplanted by the military turbulence, which made way for his murderer, Philip the Arabian.

Origen, in a letter to his scholar Gregory Thaumaturgus, exhorts him to apply himself chiefly to the holy scripture, to read it very attentively, not to speak or judge of it lightly, but with unshaken faith and prayer, which, says he, is absolutely necessary for the understanding of it. This exhortation will be noticed by the pious reader, doubtless, with satisfaction. It proves that his philosophy had not obliterated his Christianity.

A fresh attempt was now made to pervert the doctrine of the person of Christ. Beryllus, bishop of Bostra, in Arabia, affirmed that our Saviour before his incarnation, had no proper divinity, but only the Father's divinity dwelling in himself. Thus Eusebius states the matter. It is not easy to form correct ideas of these sentiments. They seem, however, to annihilate the divine personality of the eternal word. The man, it seems, was not obstinate; he listened to sound scriptural argument, and was therefore reclaimed by means of Origen. He even loved him as an instructor ever after, and was sincerely thankful to him; a circumstance which reflects an amiable light on the character of Beryllus.

Philip began to reign in the year 244. Eusebius tells us that he was a Christian; and indeed that he was so, by profession, seems well attested by the concurrent voice of antiquity. He is said to have submitted to certain ecclesiastical censures from the bishop; but the report is void of proper authentication, and most probably, he ranked at his death only as a catechumen. There is, however, no doubt, that he died in the fourth year of his reign, and in the year of C

247, he allowed and conducted the secular games, which were full of idolatry; and this is a fact, which clearly proves that he was not disposed to give up any thing for the sake of Christ. And, in general, there is not the least ground to conclude from history that he was a cordial friend to the gospel. Nevertheless the progress of Christianity in the world at this time must have been very great, which could induce so worldly-minded a person as Philip to countenance it without reserve or ambiguity. To this emperor and to his wife Severa, Origen wrote an epistle, which was extant in Eusebius's time.

It appears from one of the homilies of Origen, that the long peace which the church, with only the short interruption of Maximin's persecution, had enjoyed, was followed by a great degree of lukewarmness and even of much religious indecorum. Let the reader only notice the difference between the scenes which he here describes, and the conduct of the Christians both in the first and second century, and he will be affected with the greatness of the declension.

'Several,' says he, 'come to the church only on solemn festivals, and then not so much for instruction as diversion. Some go out again as soon as they have heard the lecture, without conferring or asking the pastors any questions: others stay not till the lecture is ended; and others hear not so much as a single word, but entertain themselves in a corner of the church.'

By the blessing of Almighty God, nothing was so likely to conquer this careless spirit, as the faithful dispensation of the peculiar truths of the gospel in a practical manner, so as to search the heart. But the ability, as well as the taste, for doing this had much declined in the eastern part of the church especially. Origen complains, elsewhere, of the ambitious and haughty manners of pastors, and of the improper steps which some took to obtain preferments.

This great man was now once more employed in

Arabia in confuting another error, namely, of those who denied the intermediate state of souls, and this he managed with his usual good success.

Philip enjoyed the fruits of his crimes five years, and was then slain and succeeded by Decius. A little before his death, in the year 248, Cyprian was chosen bishop of Carthage, a character who partook indeed of the declensions which we have noticed and lamented, but who was still far superior, I apprehend, in real simplicity and piety, to the Christians of the east.

III -CYPRIAN

THE life of this prelate was written by Pontius his deacon. It is to be regretted, that one who must have known him so well, should have written in so incompetent a manner. Very little distinct information is to be gathered from him; but Cyprian's own letters are extant, and from them I shall endeavour to exhibit whatever is of the greatest moment. They are, in truth, a valuable treasure of ecclesiastical history; the spirit, taste, discipline, and habits of the times, among Christians, are strongly delineated, nor have we, in all the third century, any account to be compared with them. He was a professor of oratory in the city of Carthage, and a man of wealth, quality, and dignity. Cæcilius, a Carthaginian presbyter, had the felicity, under God, to conduct him to the knowledge of Christ; and, in his gratitude, Cyprian afterwards assumed the prænomen of Cæcilius. His conversion was about the year 246, and two years before his elevation to the see of Carthage. About thirteen years comprehended the whole scene of his Christian life. But God can do great things in a little time, or, to speak more nervously with the sacred writer, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years." He did not proceed by slow painful steps of argumentation, but seems to have been led

on with vast rapidity by the effectual operation of the Divine Spirit; and he happily escaped, in a great measure at least, the shoals and quicksands of false learning and self-conceit, which so much tarnished the character of his eastern brethren. Faith and love in native simplicity appear to have been possessed by him when an early convert. He saw with pity the poor of the flock; and he knew no method so proper of employing 'the unrighteous mammon' as in relieving their distress. He sold whole estates for their benefit.

It was an excellent rule of the apostle concerning ordination, 'Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' There appeared, however, in Cyprian a spirit at once so simple, so zealous, and so intelligent, that in about two years after his conversion, he was chosen presbyter, and then bishop of Carthage.

It was no feigned virtue that thus advanced him in the eyes of the people. With Cyprian the love of Christ evidently preponderated above all secular considerations. In vain his wife opposed his Christian spirit of liberality. The widow, the orphan, and the poor, found in him a sympathizing benefactor continually. The presbyter Cæcilius must have beheld with much delight the growing virtues of his pupil. When dying, he recommended to his care his own wife and children. It was with no satisfaction that Cyprian observed the designs of the people to choose him for their bishop. He retired, to avoid solicitation; his house was besieged; his retreat was rendered impossible. He yielded at length, and, with much reluctance, accepted the painful pre-eminence; for so he soon found it. Five presbyters, however, were enemies to his exaltation. His lenity, patience, and benevolence towards them were remarked by every one.

The active spirit of Cyprian was, no doubt, much employed before he was made a bishop; indeed

Pontius tells us that this was actually the case: he communicates no particulars.

How Cyprian conducted himself in his bishopric who is sufficient to relate? says Pontius in the fulness of his admiration. Some particular account, however, might have been expected from one who had such large opportunity of information. He makes some brief observations on his external appearance. 'His looks had the due mixture of gravity and cheerfulness; so that it was doubtful whether he were more worthy of love or of reverence. His dress also was correspondent to his looks. He renounced the secular pomp to which his rank was entitled him; yet he avoided affected penury - for a man of Cyprian's piety and good sense would such a conduct might be expected.

While Cyprian was labouring to recover the spirit of godliness among the Africans, which long past had corrupted, Philip was slain, and succeeded by Decius. His enmity to the former emperor conspired with his pagan prejudices to bring on the most dreadful persecution which the church had yet experienced. It was evident that nothing less than the destruction of the Christian name was intended. The Chronology is here remarkably embarrassed, nor is it an object of much consequence to trouble either myself or the reader with studious attempts to settle it. Suffice it to say, that the events before us of Cyprian's bishopric extends from the year 248 to 260, and that Decius's successive reign in the empire must have taken place about the beginning of it. The persecution raged with astonishing fury beyond the example of former persecutions, both in the east and west. The latter is the scene before us at present. In a treatise of Cyprian concerning the lapses, we have an affecting account of the decay of the spirit of Christianity, which had taken place before his conversion, and which moved him to chastise his church. 'If the cause of our mis-

says he, 'be investigated, the cure of the wound may be found. The Lord would have his family to be tried. And because long peace had corrupted the discipline divinely revealed to us, the heavenly chastisement hath raised up our faith, which had lain almost dormant; and when, by our sins, we had deserved to suffer still more, the merciful Lord so moderated all things, that the whole scene rather deserves the name of a trial than a persecution. Each had been bent on improving his patrimony; and had forgotten what believers had done under the apostles, and what they ought always to do,—they were brooding over the arts of amassing wealth; the pastors and the deacons each forgot their duty; works of mercy were neglected, and discipline was at the lowest ebb. Luxury and effeminacy prevailed; meretricious arts in dress were cultivated; fraud and deceit were practised among brethren. Christians could unite themselves in matrimony with unbelievers; could swear not only without reverence, but even without veracity. With haughty asperity they despised their ecclesiastical superiors; they railed against one another with outrageous acrimony, and conducted quarrels with determined malice; even many bishops, who ought to be guides and patterns to the rest, neglecting the peculiar duties of their stations, gave themselves up to secular pursuits. They deserted their places of residence and their flocks; they travelled through distant provinces in quest of pleasure and gain; gave no assistance to the needy brethren; but were insatiable in their thirst of money; they possessed estates by fraud, and multiplied usury. What have we not deserved to suffer for such a conduct? Even the divine word hath foretold us what we might expect, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, I will visit their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges." These things had been denounced and foretold, but in vain. Our sins

had brought our affairs to that pass, that because we had despised the Lord's directions, we were obliged to undergo a correction of our multiplied evils, and a trial of our faith by severe remedies.'

In such a situation it was not to be expected that the people under the bishop's care should, in general, stand their ground; avarice had taken deep root among them; and vast numbers lapsed into idolatry immediately. Even before men were accused as Christians, 'many run to the forum and sacrificed to the gods as they were ordered; and the crowds of apostates were so great, that the magistrates wished to delay numbers of them till the next day, but they were importuned by the wretched suppliants to be allowed to prove themselves heathens that very night.'

At Rome, the persecution raged with unremitting violence. There Fabian the bishop suffered; and, for some time, it became impracticable to elect a successor; yet it does not appear that the metropolis suffered more, in proportion, than some other places, since we find that the flame of persecution had driven several bishops from distant provinces, and made them fly for shelter to Rome. Cyprian, however, having been regularly informed by the Roman clergy of the martyrdom of their bishop, congratulated them on his glorious exit, and exulted on occasion of his uprightness and integrity. He expresses the pleasure he conceived in observing that his edifying example had so much penetrated their minds; and owns the energy which he himself felt to imitate the pattern.

Moyses and Maximus, two Roman Presbyters, with other confessors, were also seized and imprisoned. Attempts were repeatedly made to persuade them to relinquish the faith, but in vain. Cyprian found means to write to them also a letter full of benevolence, and breathing the strongest pathos. He tells them that his heart was with them continually,—that

he prayed for them in his public ministry,—and in private. He comforts them under the pressures of hunger and thirst which they endured, and congratulates them for living now not for this life, but for the next; and particularly, because their example would be a means of confirming many who were in a wavering state. But Carthage soon became an unsafe scene to Cyprian himself. By repeated suffrages of the people at the theatre, he was demanded to be taken and given to the lions; and it behoved him immediately either to retire into a place of safety, or to expect the crown of martyrdom.

Cyprian's spirit in interpreting Scripture was more simple, and more accommodated to receive its plain and obvious sense, than that of men who had learned to refine and subtilize. He knew the liberty which his Divine Master had given to his people—of fleeing when they were persecuted in one city, to another;—and he embraced it. Nay, he seems scarcely to have thought it lawful to do otherwise. Even the last state of his martyrdom evinces this. His manner of enduring it, when it, providentially, was brought on him, sufficiently acquits him of all suspicion of pusillanimity. To unite such seemingly opposite things as discretion and fortitude, each in a very high degree, is a sure characteristic of greatness in a Christian:—It is grace in its highest perfection.—Pontius thinks it was not without a particular divine direction that he was moved to act in this manner for the benefit of the church.

Behold him at present, in some place of retreat, under the protection of God, and through the love of his people safe for the space of two years from the arm of a most barbarous persecution; and let us next see how he employed this interval of retirement.

Cyprian was never more active than in his retreat. Nothing of moment occurred in ecclesiastical affairs either in Africa or in Italy with which he was unacquainted; and his counsels, under God, were of the

greatest influence in both countries. I shall endeavour, from his own letters, which were written in this period, to abbreviate this account.

The presbyters of Carthage sent Clementius, a sub-deacon, to Rome, from whom the Roman clergy learnt the place of the retreat of the bishop. They, in return, express to the Africans their perfect agreement in opinion concerning the propriety of the concealment, because he was an eminent character, and a life extremely valuable to the Church. They represent the conflict as very important, which God had now permitted for the trial of his servants. They said, it was the express purpose of God to manifest both to angels and to men, that the conquerer shall be crowned, and the conquered, that is, the faithless apostate, be self-condemned. They express the deep sense which they had both of their own situation and that of the clergy of Carthage, whose duty it was to take care not to incur the censure passed on faithless shepherds in the prophet, but rather to imitate their Lord the good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep, and who so earnestly and repeatedly charges Simon Peter, as a proof of his love to his Master, to "feed his sheep." 'We would not wish, dear brethren,' say they, 'to find you mere mercenaries, but good shepherds, since you know it must be highly sinful in you not to exhort the brethren to stand immovable in the faith, lest they be totally subverted by idolatry. Nor do we only in words thus exhort you; but, as you may learn from many who came from us to you, our actions, with the help of God, accord with our declarations: we make no scruple to hazard our lives; for we have before our eyes the fear of God and of eternal punishment, rather than the fear of men and of a temporary calamity: we do not desert the brethren; we exhort them to stand in the faith, and to be ready to follow their Lord when called. We have also done our utmost to recover those who had gone up to sacrifice in order that

they might save their lives. Our Church stands firm in the faith in general: some, indeed, overcome by terror, either because they were persons in high life or were moved by the fear of man, have lapsed; yet these, though separated from us, we do not give up as lost altogether, but we exhort them to repent, if they find mercy with him who is able to save: we would not, by abandoning them, render their case hopeless and incurable.

‘ We wish you, brethren, to act in the same manner, as much as in you lies: exhort the lapsed, if they should be seized a second time, to confess their Saviour. And we suggest to you to receive again into communion any of these, if they heartily desire it, and give proofs of sound repentance. And certainly officers should be appointed to minister to the widows, the sick, those in prison, and those who are in a state of banishment. A special care should be exercised over the catechumens, to preserve them from apostacy; and those whose duty it is to inter the dead, ought to consider the interment of the martyrs as matter of indispensable obligation.

‘ Sure we are, that those servants, who shall be found to have been thus faithful in that which is least, will have ‘ authority over ten cities.’ May God, who does all things for those who hope in him, grant that we may all be found thus diligently employed! The brethren in bonds, the clergy, and the whole Church salute you: we all of us with earnest solicitude watch and pray for all who call on the name of the Lord. And we beseech you, in return, to be mindful of us also in your prayers.’

The mind of Cyprian, full of the fear of God, and reflecting, from a comparison of Christian precepts with the bad practice of many, how exceedingly his people had provoked the Lord before the persecution, was vehemently incited to stir them up to repentance. He addresses them from his recess, as follows:—
‘ Though I am sensible, dearest brethren, that as we

all live in the obedient fear of God, you are instant in prayers, yet I also admonish you that we ought to breathe out our souls to God, not only in words, but also in fasting, tears, and every method of supplication. In truth, we must understand and confess that the apostacy which, in so large a degree, has wasted our flock and still wastes it, is the proper consequence of our sins.'

Thus the persecution at Carthage appears to have been very dreadful; but mostly so on account of the number of apostates: the Christian faith, patience, and magnanimity of Cyprian and of a small remnant were in full exercise.

The persecutors endeavoured to lessen the number of Christians by banishing from Carthage all those who confessed Christ: but this not answering their purpose, they proceeded to cruel torments. Cyprian, hearing that some had expired under their sufferings, and that others were still in prison yet alive, wrote to these last a letter of encouragement and consolation. Their limbs had been sorely mangled and torn, so that they appeared like one continued wound; yet they remained firm in the faith and love of Jesus. One of them, Mappalicus, amidst his torments, said to the proconsul, 'To-morrow you shall see a contest for a prize.'—He alluded to the crown of martyrdom; and, what he uttered in faith, the Lord fulfilled:—He lost his life in the conflict on the next day.

So eagerly, and so firmly was the mind of Cyprian fixed on heavenly things; and so completely lifted up above the world, that he ardently exulted and triumphed amidst those scenes of horror. He described the martyrs and confessors as wiping away the tears of the church, while she was bewailing the ruins of her sons. He represents even Christ himself as looking down with complacency; fighting and conquering in his servants; and giving strength to believers in proportion to their faith:—'He was present in the contest,' says he; 'he encouraged, corroborated, and

mated his warriors. And he, who once conquered death FOR US, always conquers IN US.' Toward the close of his epistle, he consoles, with suitable arguments, those who had not yet been crowned with martyrdom, but were prepared for it in spirit.

The joy of Cyprian, on account of the faithfulness of the martyrs, was, however, considerably damped by the disorderly conduct, which began to take place in his absence. Those, who had suffered tortures for Christ, and were on the point of martyrdom, and to whom it was usual to make application for the presentation of petitions, wrote to him and requested, that the consideration of the cases of lapsed Christians might be deferred till the persecution was stopped, and the bishop was restored to his church. In the mean time several of these lapsed brethren offered themselves to certain presbyters of Carthage to be received again into communion : and they were actually re-admitted to the Lord's Supper without any just evidence of their repentance. The bishop dissembled not his displeasure on this occasion. He confessed, he had long borne with these disorders for the sake of peace, till he thought it his duty to bear with them no longer. He said, ' that it was quite unprecedented to transact these things without the consent of the bishop ; and that, even in lesser offences, a regular time of penitence was exacted of the members, a certain course of discipline took place, they made open confession of their sins, and were readmitted to communion by the imposition of hands of the bishop and his clergy.' He directs that the irregular practice might be stopped, till, on his return, every thing should be settled with propriety.

Some of the martyrs themselves, it appears, acted very inconsiderately in this business, and gave to lapsed persons recommendatory papers, conceived in general terms. Cyprian wishes them to express the names of the persons, and to give no such recommendations to any but those, of whose sincere repent-

ance they had some good proof: and even in that case to refer the ultimate cognizance of such matters to the bishop.

His exhortations to his clergy were not without effect. They fell in with his views, and solicited the people to patience, modesty, and real repentance. They consulted him how they should act in certain critical cases. He referred them to his former letters, and repeated his ideas of the proper season of settling, in general, the concerns of the lapsed; at the same time he urged the indecency of some persons in expecting a readmission into the church before the return of those who were in exile, and were stripped of all their goods for the sake of the gospel. 'But if they are in such excessive hurry,' said the bishop, 'it is in their own power to obtain even more than they desire. The battle is not yet over, the conflict is daily carrying on. If they cordially repent, and the fire of divine faith burns in their breasts, he who cannot brook a delay, may, if he please, be crowned with martyrdom.'

The African prelate was ever studious of preserving an intimate connexion with the Roman church, where still the persecution raged and prevented the election of a successor to Fabian.

A confessor, named Celerinus, who lived in some part of Africa, most probably in banishment, was much grieved on account of the apostasy of his two sisters, Numeria and Candina. He wept night and day in sackcloth and ashes on their account; and hearing of Lucian still being in prison, and reserved for martyrdom at Carthage, he wrote to him to intreat that either he himself or any of his suffering brethren, particularly whosoever should first be called to martyrdom, would restore them to the church. He begs the same favour for Eteusa also, who, though she had not sacrificed, had given money to be excused from the act. He assures Lucian of the sincerity of their repentance, and says, it was evidenced

by their kindness and assiduity in attending on the suffering brethren. He manifestly attributes too much to the character of martyrs, in affirming, that ‘because they were friends and witnesses of Christ, they had therefore a power of indulging all requests of this sort.’ This letter and the answer of Lucian contain a mixture of good and evil. They exhibit true grace tarnished with pitiable ignorance and superstition.

The conduct of Lucian affords a memorable and lamentable instance of the weakness of human nature even in a regenerate spirit. His answer to Celerinus displays the most consummate fortitude; and this, as far as appears, grounded in the main, on the true faith and love of Christ. The existence of a deplorable and subtile spirit of pride, in some degree is, perhaps, not to be denied; but this holy man was certainly not aware of the alloy. He describes himself and his companions as shut up and pressed together excessively close in two small cells, and also greatly suffering from hunger, thirst, and intolerable heat. He mentions a number of them as already killed in prison, and adds, that in a few days he himself must expire. ‘For five days,’ says he, ‘we have received very little bread, and the water is apportioned to us by measure.’ Such were the sufferings of this persecution. Lucian speaks of all this in a cool and most unaffected manner; like one whose mind was lifted up above the world and its utmost malice, and patiently expected a blessed immortality. As to the petition of Celerinus in favour of his sisters, he informs him that Paul the martyr, who had lately suffered, had visited him “while yet in the body,” and had said, ‘Lucian, I say to thee before Christ, that if any person after my decease beg of you to be restored to the church, do you, in my name, grant his request.’ Lucian extends this generosity to the greatest height, and refers him to the general letter, which he had already written in behalf

of the lapsed. Yet he owns, they ought to explain their cause before the bishop, and make a confession. It is very plain, however, that he attributes, in this matter, a sort of superior dignity to Paul, to himself, and to the other martyrs; and, no doubt, the vain-glory of martyrdom was much augmented by the excessive regard which now began to be shown to sufferers. These and similar facts constrain the reluctant historian to acknowledge, that the corruptions of superstition, in giving immoderate honour to saints and martyrs, which afterwards, through Satan's artifice and delusion, grew to the enormous pitch of idolatry itself, had already entered the church, and contaminated the simplicity and the purity of Christian faith and dependence. Yet this concession, it must be remembered, implies no suspicion of hypocrisy either in the martyrs or in their admirers. This same Lucian was a man of true, of substantial piety. He wept and lamented exceedingly on account of the lapsed women, and had the fear of God constantly before his eyes.

The eyes of all prudent and more discerning persons in the church were fixed on the bishop of Carthage in this emergency. The danger of the loss of the gospel itself, by substituting a dependence on saints instead of Christ Jesus, forcibly struck his mind. His connexion with the Roman clergy, and the superior regard to discipline which there prevailed, was of some service on the occasion; and in his correspondence with them, he compares the immoderate assuming conduct of Lucian, with the modesty of the martyrs Mappalicus and Saturninus, who had abstained from such practices. The former had written only in behalf of his own mother and sister; and the latter, who had been tortured and imprisoned, had yet sent out no letters whatever of this kind. Lucian, he complains, everywhere furnished the lapsed with letters testimonial for their reception into the church, written with his own hand

in the name of Paul when alive, continued to furnish them after his death, and declared that that martyr had directed him so to do : though he should have known, says Cyprian, that he ought to obey the Lord rather than his fellow-servant.

A young person, named Aurelius, who had suffered torments, was seized with the same vanity, but was unable to write : and Lucian wrote many papers in his name.

Cyprian complains of the odium thus incurred by the bishops. In some cities, he takes notice how the multitude had forced the bishops to readmit the lapsed ; but he blames those rulers of the church for want of faith and Christian constancy. In his own diocese he had occasion for all his fortitude. Some who were formerly turbulent, were now much more so, and insisted on being speedily readmitted. He observes that baptism is performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; and that remission of past sins is then received, and then he complains that the name of Paul, in effect, is inserted in the place of the Trinity. He applies, on this occasion, St. Paul's well-known holy execration denounced in the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians. He owns his obligation to Rome for the letters of their clergy, which were well calculated to withstand these abuses.

He wrote a congratulatory letter to the confessors Moyses and Maximus, whose faith and zeal, united with modesty and with the strictest attention to discipline, he had formerly much commended : and he now thanks them for the epistolary advice, which they had given to the African confessors. In their answer they appear transported with holy joy, and elevated with the heavenly prospects before them. They quote the New Testament scriptures relative to these things, and express such strength of faith, hope, and charity, as demonstrates the real power of divine grace to have been possessed by them in a very emi-

ment manner. Their love of the divine word and of just discipline appears no less great than their zeal and ardour for martyrdom. They observe how deeply and how widely spread the evil of defection had been, and they conclude with very just observations on the right method of treating the lapsed, in perfect agreement with Cyprian. Greatness of mind, a high sense of the importance of order, a heavenly warmth of temper, and an accuracy of judgment, are equally and abundantly evident in this epistle. Such endowments existing in just proportion prove that the work of the Holy Spirit was very sound in these excellent men.

Cyprian now wrote to the lapsed themselves, and rebuked the precipitation of some, and exposed the injustice of their claims, since they acted as if they took to themselves the whole title of the church. He commended the modesty of others, who refused to take advantage of the indiscreet recommendation of the martyrs, and who wrote to him in the language of penitents: whence it appears that the folly of the lapsed was by no means universal.

Gaius Diddensis, one of the presbyters of Cyprian, undertook, along with his deacon, against the sense of the rest of the clergy, to communicate with the lapsed. Repeated admonitions availed not to a reformation. As the bishop was sensible that the common people, for whose salvation he was solicitous, were deceived by these things, he commends his clergy for refusing communion with so obstinate and irregular a presbyter and deacon. He again intimates his intention of judging all things in full council upon his return: and intreats them to cooperate, in the mean time, with his views in the maintenance of discipline. In writing again to the Roman clergy, he declares his determination of acting as God had directed his ministers in the gospel, if the contumacious were not reformed by his and by their admonitions.

The Roman clergy condole affectionately with Cyprian ;—‘ Our sorrow,’ say they, ‘ is doubled, because you have no rest from these pressing difficulties of the persecution ; and because the immoderate petulance of the lapsed has proceeded to the height of arrogance. But though these things have grievously afflicted our spirits ; yet your firmness and evangelical strictness of discipline have moderated the load of vexation : you have both restrained the wickedness of certain persons ; and also, by exhorting them to repentance, have shown them the wholesome way to salvation. We are astonished that they should proceed to such lengths, in a time so mournful, so unseasonable as the present ; that they should not so much as ask for re-communication with the church, but claim it as a right ; and even affirm that they are already forgiven in heaven. Never cease, brother, in your love of souls, to moderate and restrain these violent spirits ; and to offer the medicine of truth to the erroneous, though the inclination of the sick be often opposite to the prudent industry of the physician. These wounds of the lapsed are fresh, and produce considerable tumours ; but we feel assured, that, in process of time, their heat and violence will subside ; and the patients themselves will then be thankful for that delay, which was absolutely necessary for a wholesome cure, provided there be none to arm them with weapons against themselves, and, by perverse instructions, to demand for them the deadly poison of an over-hasty restoration : for we cannot think that they would all have dared to have claimed their admission so petulantly, without the encouragement of some persons of ecclesiastical influence. We know the faith, the good order, the humility of the Carthaginian church ; whence we have been surprised in noticing certain harsh reflections made against you in a certain epistle, when we have formerly had repeated proof of your mutual charity.’

An African, named Privatus, who had left his country, and travelled to Rome, solicited to be there received as a Christian. Cyprian had mentioned him to the Roman clergy, and pointed out his real and dangerous character. In the close of this admirable letter they inform him that, before they had received his cautionary letters, they had detected the impostor. At the same time they lay down a golden maxim, 'that we all ought to watch for the body of the whole church, diffused through various provinces.' It was this unity and uniformity of the Christian church, which hitherto had preserved it, under God, from the infection of heresies.

There was a very young man, named Aurelius, whom Cyprian speaks of as greatly excelling in the graces of Christianity. He had twice undergone the rage of persecution for the sake of Christ: banishment was his first punishment, and torture the second. The bishop had ordained this youth a reader in the church of Carthage; and he apologizes on account of the peculiar circumstances of the case and of the times, for his not having previously consulted his presbyters and deacons. He beseeches them to pray, that both their bishop and good Aurelius may be restored to the exercise of their respective functions. I cannot but hence observe, how exact and orderly the ideas of ordination were in those times. It is not to the advantage of godliness among us, that persons can now be introduced to very high offices in the ministry without much previous trial, ceremony, or difficulty.

Celerinus was also ordained a reader by the same authority. However weak in judgment he may appear from the transactions between him and Lucian already stated, the man suffered with great zeal for the sake of Christ. The very beginning of the persecution found him a ready combatant. For nineteen days he had remained in prison fettered and starved: but he persevered, and escaped at length without

martyrdom. His grandfather and two of his uncles had suffered for Christ, and their anniversaries were celebrated by the church.

It seems that Cyprian thought proper to reward with honourable establishments in the church those who had suffered with the greatest faithfulness in the persecution which was now drawing to a close. Numidicus was advanced to the office of presbyter. He had attended a great number of martyrs who were murdered, partly with stones, and partly by fire. His wife, sticking close by his side, was burnt to death with the rest: he himself, half-burnt, buried with stones, and left for dead, was found afterwards by his daughter; and, through her care, he recovered. Probably this last case was the effect of the tumultuary rage of a persecuting populace: the ferocity of many in those times did not permit them to wait for legal orders. Who can tell the number of Christian sufferers, which this mode of oppression must have added to the list of martyrs?

In addition to other evils, the providence of God now thought fit to exercise the mind of Cyprian with one of the most distressing calamities which can happen to a lover of peace and charity—the rise of a schism.

There existed in the church of Carthage a person of a very exceptionable character, named Felicissimus, who had long been a secret enemy of the bishop. By the same artifices and blandishments which seditious persons make use of in all ages, this man had enticed some of the flock to himself; and he held communion with them on a certain mountain. Among these, and in their neighbourhood, there arrived several discreet brethren, who were authorized by Cyprian to discharge the debts of poor Christians; and to furnish them with small sums of money to begin business again; and also to make a report of their ages, conditions, and qualities, that he might select such of them for ecclesiastical offices, as should

be judged properly qualified. Felicissimus opposed and thwarted both these designs. Several of the poor, who came first to be relieved, were threatened by him with imperious severity, because they refused to communicate on the mountain. This man growing more insolent, and taking advantage of Cyprian's absence, whose return he speedily expected, because the persecution had nearly ceased at Carthage, raised an opposition against the bishop in form, found means to unite a considerable party to himself, and threatened all those persons, who did not choose to partake in the sedition. Among other crimes, this sower of discord had been guilty of adultery; and he now saw no method of preventing an infamous excommunication, but that of setting up himself as a leader. His second in this odious business was named Augendus, who did his utmost to promote the same views. Cyprian, by letter, expressed his vehement sorrow, on account of these evils, promised to take full cognizance of them on his return, and in the mean time he wrote to his clergy, to suspend from communion Felicissimus and his abettors. His clergy wrote to him in answer, that they had suspended the chiefs of the faction accordingly.

In the mean time there were not wanting upright and zealous ministers, who instructed the people at Carthage. Among these were distinguished Britius the presbyter, also Rogatian and Numidicus, confessors; and some deacons of real godliness. These warned their flocks of the evils of schism, and endeavoured to preserve peace and unity, and to recover the lapsed by wholesome methods. In addition to their labours, Cyprian now wrote to the people themselves. 'For,' says he, 'the malice and perfidy of some presbyters hath effected, that I should not be able to come to you before Easter. But the source of the faction of Felicissimus is now discovered, and we are acquainted with the foundation

on which it stands. His followers encourage certain confessors, that they should not harmonize with their bishop, nor observe ecclesiastical discipline faithfully and modestly. And, as if it were too little for them to have corrupted the minds of confessors, and to have armed them against their pastor, and to have stained the glory of their confession, they turned themselves to poison the spirits of the lapsed, to keep them from the great duty of constant prayer, and to invite them to an unsound and dangerous re-admission. But I beseech you, brethren, watch against the snares of the devil: be on your guard, and “work out your own salvation:” this is a second and a different sort of persecution and temptation. The five seditious presbyters may be justly compared to the five pagan rulers, who lately, in conjunction with the magistrates, published some plausible arguments with a view of subverting souls. The same method is now tried, for the ruin of your souls, by the five presbyters, with Felicissimus at their head: they teach you, that you need not petition,—that he who hath denied Christ, may cease to supplicate the same Christ whom he hath denied; that repentance is not necessary; and, in short, that every thing should be conducted in a novel manner, and contrary to the rules of the gospel.

‘ My banishment of two years, and my mournful separation from your presence; my constant grief and perpetual lamentation; and my tears flowing day and night, because the pastor whom you chose with so much love and zeal could not salute nor embrace you; all this, it seems, was not a sufficient accumulation of sorrow. To my distressed and exhausted spirit a still greater evil must be added, that in so great a solicitude I cannot, with propriety, come over to you. The threats and snares of the perfidious oblige me to use caution; lest, on my arrival, the tumults should increase; and lest I myself, the bishop, who ought to provide in all things

for peace and tranquillity, should seem to have afforded matter for sedition, and again to exasperate the miseries of the persecution. Most dear brethren, I beseech you do not give rash credit to the pernicious representations of those who put darkness for light: they speak, but not from the word of the Lord: they, who are themselves separated from the church, promise to restore the lapsed.

‘ There is one God, one Christ, one church. Depart, I pray you, far from these men, and avoid their discourse, as a plague and pestilence. They hinder your prayers and tears, by affording you false consolations. Acquiesce, I beseech you, in my counsel: I pray daily for you, and desire you to be restored to the church by the grace of the Lord.—Join your prayers and tears with mine. But if any person shall despise repentance, and betake himself to Felicissimus and to his faction, let him know that his re-admission into the church will be impracticable.’

But there was also another character, who was a primary agent in these disagreeable scenes—Novatus, a presbyter of Carthage, a man extremely scandalous and immoral. His domestic crimes had been so notorious as to render him not only no longer fit to be a minister, but even unworthy to be received into lay-communion. The examination of his conduct was about to take place, when the breaking out of the persecution by Decius prevented it. He it was who supported and cherished the views of Felicissimus and of the rest; and he appears, by his address and capacity, to have been extremely well qualified to produce much mischief in the church. He could do it no service; because he was absolutely devoid both of honesty and conscience. Felicissimus himself, though at first the ostensible leader of the congregation on the mountain, gave way afterwards to one of the five presbyters, named Fortunatus, who was constituted bishop in opposition to Cy-

prian. Most of the five had been already branded with infamy for immoralities. Yet so deep is the corruption of human nature, that such characters usually find advocates, even where the light of the gospel shines, and where there exist pastors of eminent sanctity.

Novatus, either unwilling to face the bishop of Carthage, or desirous to extend the mischiefs of schism, passed the sea and came to Rome. There he connected himself with a priest, named Novatian, a friend of the confessor Moyses, who has been already mentioned, and whose sufferings at Rome were of a tedious nature. Novatus had the address and management to effect the separation of Novatian from the church. Moyses renounced all intercourse with his former friend and acquaintance on account of his conduct, and soon after died in prison, where he had been confined nearly a year. Doubtless, he entered into eternal glory at length, having left the evidence of modesty and peacefulness, in addition to his other more splendid virtues, as testimonies of his love to the Lord Jesus.

Novatus found the religious ideas of his new associate and partner arranged in extreme opposition to his own. Novatian had been a Stoic before he was a Christian, and he still retained the rigour of the sect to such a degree, that he disapproved of receiving those into the church who once had lapsed, though they gave the sincerest marks of repentance. Full of these unwarranted severities, he exclaimed against the wise and well-tempered lenity of the Roman clergy in receiving penitents. Many of the clergy of Rome, who were still in prison for the faith,—and among these Maximus and others, to whom Cyprian had formerly written,—were seduced by this apparent zeal for church-discipline, and they joined Novatian. His African tutor, with astonishing inconsistency, after having stirred up a general indignation in his own country and against his own

bishop on account of severity to the lapsed, now supported a party who complained of too much lenity at Rome. It is hard to say which of the two extremes is the worse. Novatus defended both within the compass of two years; and with equal pertinacity.

The Roman clergy thought it high time to stem the torrent. They had, for sixteen months, with singular piety and fortitude, governed the church during one of its most stormy seasons. Schism was now added to persecution. The necessity of choosing a bishop grew more and more urgent; yet a bishop of Rome must, of course, be in the most imminent danger of martyrdom; for Decius threatened all bishops with great haughtiness and asperity. Sixteen of them happened to be then at Rome, and these ordained Cornelius as the successor of Fabian. He was very unwilling to accept the office, but the people, who were present, approved of his ordination; and no step was to be neglected which might be useful in withstanding the growing schism. The life of Cornelius appears to have been worthy of the gospel: Novatian, however, not only vented many calumnies against him, but also contrived, in a very irregular manner, to be elected bishop in opposition.

Thus was formed the first body of Christians, who, in modern language, may be called dissenters, that is, men who separate from the general church, not on grounds of doctrine, but of discipline. The Novatianists held no opinions contrary to the faith of the gospel. It is certain, from some writings of Novatian extant, that their leader was sound in the doctrine of the Trinity. But the confessors, whom his pretensions to superior purity had seduced, returned afterwards to the communion of Cornelius, and mourned over their own credulity. In a letter of Cornelius to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, a few circumstances are occasionally mentioned, from which an idea of the state of the church of Rome, at

that time, may be collected. There were, under the bishop, forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolyths, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and porters, and upwards of fifteen hundred widows, and infirm or disabled persons. 'The number of the laity was,' says he, 'innumerable.'

In this letter he charges Novatian, perhaps without sufficient warrant, with having denied himself to be a priest during the heat of the persecution, and with obliging his separatists, when he administered to them the Lord's Supper, to swear to adhere to himself. The party, however, at Rome, daily lost ground. Nicostratus, the deacon, was among the very few persons of note there, who, after being seduced by the arts of Novatian, did not return into communion and peace with Cornelius. Conscious of scandalous crimes, this schismatic fled from Rome into Africa, whither Novatus himself also returned; and there the Novatians found many adherents, and are said to have elected for themselves, as a sort of counter-bishop, a presbyter named Maximus, who had been lately sent as deputy from Rome, by Novatian, to inform Cyprian of the new election in opposition to that of Cornelius. This same deputy, Cyprian had rejected from communion.

It would not have been worth while to have detailed these events so distinctly, but for the purpose of marking the symptoms of declension in the church, the unity of which was now broken for the first time: for it ought not to be concluded that all the Novatians were men void of the faith and love of Jesus.

At length Cyprian ventured out of his retreat and returned to Carthage. In what manner he there conducted himself, shall be the subject of the next chapter.

IV.—CYPRIAN'S SETTLEMENT OF HIS CHURCH AFTER HIS RETURN, AND THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN CHURCH TILL THE PERSECUTION UNDER GALLUS.

THE prudence of Cyprian had been so remarkable during the whole of the persecution of Decius, that we may fairly conclude he had ceased to apprehend any personal danger when he appeared again in public at Carthage. In fact, it was not the cessation of malice, but the distraction of public affairs, which put an end to this persecution. Decius, on account of the incursion of the Goths, was obliged to leave Rome; and God gave a respite to his servants, while men of the world were wholly taken up with resisting or mourning under their secular calamities. After Easter, a council was held at Carthage, and the eyes of Christians were turned toward it. The church was in a very confused state, and some settlement of it was expected under the auspices of Cyprian and the other bishops of Africa. At first, a short delay was occasioned on account of doubts which arose respecting the validity of the election of Cornelius. But an exact information of the circumstances laid open the truth. The regularity of his appointment, and the violation of order in the schismatical ordination of Novatian, by some persons who were in a state of intoxication, appeared so clearly, that no room for hesitation was left. Novatian was rejected in the African synod; Felicissimus, with his five presbyters, was condemned; and Cornelius was owned as legitimate bishop of Rome. And now the case of the lapsed, which had given so much disquietude, and which Cyprian had so often promised to settle in full council, was finally determined; and with men, who feared God, it was no hard thing to adjust a due medium. A proper temperature was used between the precipitation of the lapsed and the stoical severity of Novatian. Hence, tried penitents were restored, and the case of dubious characters

was deferred; and yet every method of Christian charity was used to bring about and facilitate their repentance and re-admission.

Fortunatus preserved still a schismatical assembly. But both this bishop and his flock shrunk soon into insignificance. The Christian authority of Cyprian was restored. The Novatian party alone remained a long time after, in Africa and elsewhere, numerous enough to continue a distinct body of professing Christians. The very little satisfactory light, which Christian annals afford concerning these dissenters, shall be given in its place.

Thus did it please God to make use of the vigour and perseverance of Cyprian in recovering the church of Carthage from a state of most deplorable declension. First, she had lost her purity and piety to a very alarming degree; then, she was torn with persecution, and sifted by the storm so much, that the greatest part of her professors apostatized; and, lastly, she was convulsed by schisms, through men's unwillingness to submit to the rules of God's own word in wholesome discipline and sincere repentance. On Cyprian's return, however, a new train of regulation was established by the council of Carthage; and unity was restored in a great measure. The accounts of the succeeding transactions are imperfect, but there is great reason to believe that the church of God was much recovered in these parts.

Decius lost his life in battle in the year 251, after having reigned thirty months. A prince neither deficient in abilities nor in moral virtues, but distinguished, during this whole period, by the most cruel persecution of the church of God; he appears to have been bent on its ruin; but was stopped in his career by an overruling Providence.

The church was now allowed peace for a little time under Gallus, the successor of Decius.

Encouraged with the success of his pacific labours at home, Cyprian endeavoured to heal the breaches

of the Roman Christians. He was sensible that the example of the confessors, whom Novatian's appearance of superior piety in discipline had seduced, had occasioned a great defection. He wrote respectfully to his former correspondents, and assured them that the deepest sadness had possessed his breast on their account: he reminds them of the honour of their faithful sufferings: he intreats them to return to the church; and points out the inconsistency of their glorious confession of Christ with their present irregularity. But so exactly attentive was Cyprian to order, that he first sent the letter to Cornelius, and ordered it to be read to him, and submitted to his consideration before he would suffer it to be sent to the confessors. With the same cautious charity he explains again to Cornelius some things which had given umbrage to that prelate with respect to the delay of the acknowledgment of his ordination.

There is the strongest reason to believe that the authority of Cyprian had a great effect on the minds of Maximus and the other seduced confessors, whose undoubted piety gave the chief support to Novatian's party. But another circumstance happened about the same time, which contributed to open their eyes effectually. The excessive eagerness of the schismatics at Rome defeated their own end. With the view of increasing the schism, they were so fraudulent as to send out frequent letters in the names of these confessors, almost throughout all the churches. Maximus and the rest became acquainted with the fact, and were exceedingly surprised: they owned they knew not a syllable of the contents of these letters: and they heartily desired a re-union with the church. The whole body of the Roman Christians, and probably, at that time no purer Church existed, sympathized with these confessors both in their seduction and in their recovery. Tears of joy and thanksgiving to God burst forth in the assembly. 'We confess,' say Maximus and the rest with inge-

nuous frankness, 'our mistake. We own Cornelius the bishop of the most holy general church, chosen by Almighty God and by Christ our Lord; we suffered an imposture: we were circumvented by treachery and a captious plausibility of speech: and though we seem to have had some communication with a schismatic and a heretic, yet our mind was sincerely with the church; for we knew that there is one God, one Christ, one Lord, whom we have confessed; one Holy Ghost; and that one bishop ought to be in the general church.' 'Should we not,' says Cornelius, 'be moved with their profession; and, by restoring them to the church, give them the opportunity of acting according to that belief which they have dared to profess before all the world? We have restored Maximus the presbyter to his office: the rest we have also received with the zealous consent of the people.'

Cyprian, with his usual animation, congratulated Cornelius on the event; and describes the happy effect which the example of the confessors had on the minds of the people. And, I cannot but think that, in modern times, much evil might have been prevented in the church of Christ, if many excellent men, who have suffered their minds to be harassed by needless and frivolous scruples, had possessed more tenderness of conscience in regard to the question of schism and separation. 'No one can now be deceived,' says Cyprian, 'by the loquacity of a frantic schismatic, since it appears that good and glorious soldiers of Christ could not long be detained out of the church by perfidy and fallacy.'

The Novatians being baffled at Rome, Novatus and Nicostratus went over to Africa. We have already taken notice of their seditious attempts in those parts. Cornelius, by letter, warned Cyprian of the probable approach of the schismatics; and certainly, there is a disagreeable harshness of language in this account of his enemies as well as in the fragment of his epistle preserved by Eusebius.

From another circumstance we are led to see the strictness of discipline which then prevailed in the purest churches. Several persons, who stood for a time in persecution, and afterwards fell to the extremity of torment, were kept three years in a state of exclusion from the church; and yet they bore that time with every mark of true repentance. Cyprian being consulted, decided that they ought to be re-admitted to communion.

The appearance of a new persecution from G. now threatening the church, Cyprian, with the African synod, wrote to Cornelius on the subject of hastening the reception of penitents, that they might be armed for the approaching storm.

In the mean time Felcissimus finding, after his condemnation, no security to his reputation in Africa, crossed the sea to Rome, raised a party against Cornelius, and by menaces, threw him into great distress. Cyprian's spirit seems more disturbed on this occasion than I have seen reason to observe in any of his epistles. He supports the dignity of the episcopal character in a style of great magnificence, but it is evident, that continual ill-treatment from such characters had led him into some degree of exaltation: the language he uses concerning the authority of bishops, would sound strange to our ears, but it by no means contains any definite ideas contrary to the scriptures. The whole epistle is calculated to rouse the dejected spirit of Cornelius; and to show much of the hero—less of the Christian. He confesses—that he speaks grieved and irritated by a series of unmerited ill-usage. He takes notice that at the very time of writing this, he was agitated and commanded by the people to be exposed to the lions. He speaks of the ordination of Fortunatus and Maximus, by the schismatics, in a contemptuous manner. It is very evident, that, on the whole, he triumphed in Carthage among his own people for his great virtues and unquestionable sincerity, and

him their affections; but they seem not to have been sufficiently patient and discreet in the re-admission of offenders: he complains that, in some cases, they were violent and resentful; and in others, precipitately easy and favourable. The eloquence, and even the genuine charity of this great man, appears throughout his fifty-fifth epistle; but it is deficient in the meekness and the moderation, which shine in his other performances.

V.—THE EFFECTS OF THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS IN THE EASTERN CHURCH.

THE Eastern and Western Churches were, in those times, divided from each other by the Greek and Roman language, though cemented by the common bond of the Roman government, and much more—of the common salvation. It will often be found convenient to consider their history distinctly. The gentile Church of Jerusalem still maintained its respectability under Alexander its bishop, who has been mentioned above. He was again called on to confess Christ before the tribunal of the president at Cæsarea; and, in this second trial of his faith, having acquitted himself with his usual fidelity, he was cast into prison: his venerable locks procured him neither pity nor respect; and he finally breathed out his soul under confinement.

At Antioch, Babylas after his confession dying in bonds, Fabian was chosen his successor. In this persecution the renowned Origen was called to suffer extremely. Bonds, torments, a dungeon, the pressure of an iron chair, the distention of his feet for many days, the threats of burning, and other evils were inflicted by his enemies, all which he manfully endured; and his life was still preserved; for the judge was solicitously careful that his tortures should not kill him. This great man died in his seventieth year, about the same time as the emperor Decius.

Dionysius was at this time bishop of Alexandria, a person of great and deserved renown in the church. We are obliged to Eusebius for a few fragments of his writings, some of which being historical, must be here inserted. In an epistle to Germanus he writes thus. ‘ Sabinus, the Roman governor, sent an officer to seek me, during the persecution of Decius, and I remained four days at home, expecting his coming: he made the most accurate search in the roads, the rivers, and the fields, where he suspected I might be hid. A confusion seems to have seized him, that he could not find my house; for he had no idea that a man, in my circumstances, should stay at home. At length, after four days, God ordered me to remove; and having opened me a way contrary to all expectation, I and my servants and many of the brethren went together. The event showed that the whole was the work of Divine Providence. About sun-set, I was seized, together with my whole company, by the soldiers, and was led to Taposiris. But my friend Timotheus, by the providence of God, was not present, nor was he seized. He came afterwards to my house, and found it forsaken and guarded; and he then learned that we were taken captive. How wonderful was the dispensation! but it shall be related precisely as it happened. A countryman met Timotheus as he was flying in confusion, and asked the cause of his hurry; he told him the truth: the peasant heard the story and went away to a nuptial feast, at which it was the custom to watch all night. He informed the guests of what he had heard. At once they all rose up, as by a signal, and ran quickly to us and shouted: our soldiers, struck with a panic, fled, and the invaders found us laid down on unfurnished beds. I first thought they must have been a company of robbers. They ordered me to rise and go out quickly; at length I understood their real designs, and I cried out, and intreated them earnestly to depart, and to let us alone. But if they really meant any kindness to us,

I requested them to strike off my head, and so to deliver me from my persecutors. They compelled me to arise by downright violence, and I then threw myself on the ground. They seized my hands and feet, pulled me out by force, and placed me on an ass, and conducted me from the place.'

In so remarkable a manner was this useful life preserved to the church. We shall see it was not in vain.

In an epistle to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, he gives the following account of the persecution at Alexandria, which had preceded the Decian persecution by a whole year, and which must have happened therefore under Philip, the most open friend of Christians. 'A certain augur and poet took pains to stir up the malice of the gentiles against us, and to inflame them with zeal for the support of their own superstitions. Stimulated by him, they gave free course to their licentiousness, and deemed the murder of Christians to be the most perfect piety and the purest worship of demons. They first seized an old man, named Metras, and ordered him to blaspheme: he refused, and they beat him with clubs, and pricked his face and eyes with sharp reeds. They dragged him to the suburbs, and there they stoned him. Then they hurried one Quinta, a faithful woman, to the idol temple, and insisted on her worshipping of the gods. Quinta showed the strongest marks of abominating that practice. They then tied her by the feet, dragged her over the rough pavement through all the city, dashed her against mill stones, and whipped her: and lastly they led her back to the place where they had first seized her, and there they dispatched her. After this, with one accord, they all rushed on the houses of the godly. Every one ran to the house of his neighbour, spoiled and plundered it, and purloined the most valuable goods, and threw away those things which were vile and refuse, and burnt them in the roads; and thus was exhibited

the appearance of a captive and spoiled city. The brethren fled and withdrew themselves, and received with joy the spoiling of their goods, as those did to whom Paul beareth witness ; and I do not know that any person who fell into their hands, except one, denied the Lord. Among others, they seized an aged virgin, called Apollonia, and dashed out all her teeth, and having kindled a fire before the city, they threatened to burn her alive, unless she would consent to blaspheme. This admirable woman begged for a little intermission ; and she then quickly leaped into the fire, and was consumed. They laid violent hands on Serapion in his own house : they tortured him and broke all his limbs ; and, lastly, threw him head-long from an upper room. No road, public or private, was passable to us, by night or by day : the people crying out always and every where, that unless we would speak blasphemy, we should be thrown into the flames ; and these evils continued a long time. A sedition then succeeded, and a civil war, which averted their fury from us, and turned it against one another, and again we breathed a little during the mitigation of their rage. Immediately the change of government was announced. The persecuting Decius succeeded Philip our protector, and we were threatened with destruction. The edict, which our Lord foretold would be so dreadful as to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect, appeared against us. All were astonished ; many Christians of quality discovered themselves immediately through fear ; others who held public offices were constrained by their office to appear ; and others were brought forward and betrayed by their gentile relations. Each person was cited by name. They then approached the unholy altars ; some pale and trembling, not as if they were going to sacrifice, but to be themselves the victims ; so that they were derided by the multitude who stood around ; and it was visible to all that they were very much frightened both at the

prospect of death and at the crime of sacrificing : but some ran more readily to the altar, and affirmed boldly, that they never had been Christians. Of such our Lord affirmed most truly, that they should be saved with great difficulty. Of the rest, some followed the various examples above mentioned, and others fled. Some persisted in the faith, and suffered bonds and imprisonment for many days ; but at last before they were led to the tribunal, they abjured their religion ; others held out longer, and endured torments. But the firm and stable pillars of the Lord, being strengthened by him, and having received vigour and courage proportionate and correspondent to the lively faith which was in them, became admirable martyrs of his kingdom. The first of these was Julian, a gouty person who could neither stand nor walk ; he was brought forth with two others who carried him, one of whom immediately denied Christ. The other, called Cronion the benevolent, and old Julian himself, having confessed the Lord, were led through the whole city, very large as ye know it is, sitting on camels : they were then scourged, and were at last burnt in a very hot fire in the view of surrounding multitudes. A soldier, named Besas, stood by them and defended them from insults : which so incensed the mob, that the man lost his head for having thus behaved boldly in the service of his God. An African by birth, called Mecar, and truly meriting the appellation, having resisted much importunity, was burnt alive. After these, Epimachus and Alexander, who had long sustained imprisonment and undergone a thousand tortures, were burnt to death, and along with these four women. Ammonation, a holy virgin, was grievously tormented by the judge for having declared beforehand that she would not repeat the blasphemy which he ordered. She continued faithful, and was led away to execution. The venerable ancient Mercuria, and Dionysia, a mother indeed of many children, but a mother who

did not love her children more than the Lord, and another Ammonarion, these, together with many others, were slain by the sword without being first exposed to torments : for the president was ashamed of torturing them to no purpose, and of being baffled by women ; which had been remarkably the case in his attempt to overcome the former Ammonarion, who had undergone what might have been esteemed sufficient torture for them all. Heron, Ater, and Isodore, Egyptians, and with them a boy of fifteen, called Dioscorus, were brought before the tribunal. The boy resisted both the blandishments and the tortures which were applied to him ; the rest, after cruel torments, were burnt. The boy having answered in the wisest manner to all questions, and excited the admiration of the judge, was dismissed by him from motives of compassion, with an intimation of hope that he might afterwards repent. And now the excellent Dioscorus is with us, reserved to a greater and longer conflict. Nemesian was first accused as a partner of robbers ; but he cleared himself of this charge before the centurion. An information that he was a Christian, was then brought against him, and he came bound before the president, who most unjustly scourged him with twice the severity used in the case of malefactors, and then burnt him among robbers. Thus was he honoured in resembling Christ in suffering.

And now some of the military guard, Ammon, Zeno, Ptolemy, and Ingenuus, and with them old Theophilus, stood before the tribunal, when a certain person being interrogated whether he was a Christian, and appearing disposed to deny the imputation, they made such lively signs of aversion as to strike the beholders ; but before they could be seized, they ran voluntarily to the tribunal and owned themselves Christians, so that the governor and his assessors were astonished. God triumphed gloriously in these, and gave them evidently the ascendant over

the judges, and they went to execution with all the marks of exultation.

‘Many others through the towns and vilages were torn to pieces by the Gentiles; Iscyrion was an agent to a certain magistrate, yet he refused to sacrifice. This man, after repeated indignities, was killed by a large stake driven through his intestines. But why need I mention the multitude of those who wandered in deserts and mountains, and were at last destroyed by famine, and thirst, and cold, and diseases, and robbers, and wild beasts? Those who survived are witnesses of their faithfulness and victory. Suffice it to relate one fact. There was a very aged person named Chæremon, bishop of the city of Nilus. He, together with his wife, fled into an Arabian mountain: and they did not return, nor could the brethren, after much searching, discover them alive or dead; and many persons about the same Arabian mountain were led captive by the barbarian Saracens, some of whom were afterwards redeemed for money with difficulty; others could never regain their liberty.’ Dionysius adds something concerning the benevolence of the martyrs towards the lapsed, and contrasts it with the inexorable severity of Novatian.

Two things are evident from this narrative, 1st. That the persecution found the Eastern Christians as poorly provided against the storm as the Western. Long peace and prosperity had corrupted both; and, men, in the former part of this century, had forgotten that a Christian life was that of a stranger and pilgrim. The Decian persecution, under God, was at once a scourge and an antidote. 2nd. Yet there still existed a competent number of those who should prove the truth of Christianity, and the power of divine grace accompanying it. The true church is not destroyed, but flourishes and triumphs amidst both inward and outward evils.

Dionysius wrote several other tracts, which are

mentioned by Eusebius: among the rest he wrote Cornelius, bishop of Rome, in answer to his letter against Novatian; and informed him, that he had been invited by Helenus of Tarsus in Cilicia, and the rest of the bishops of his neighbourhood, Firmilian of Cappadocia and Theoctistes of Palestine, to meet them in a synod at Antioch, where some attempts were made to strengthen the Novatian party. But all these churches united to condemn the schism: and, with this view, Dionysius wrote to the Roman confessors both before and after they had returned to the church. On the whole, the East and West united in condemning the new dissection, whose head having professed that some brethren had compelled him to the separation, Dionysius wrote Novatian himself to this effect: 'If you were unwillingly, as you say, you will prove it by retreating willingly; for a man ought to suffer any thing rather than to rend the church of God. Even martyrdom on this account would be no less glorious than on any other; even more so: for in common martyrdom a man is a witness for one soul—here for the whole church. And now, if you would conquer or persuade the brethren to unanimity, your conduct would be more laudable than your defect was culpable. The latter will be forgotten, the former will be celebrated through the Christian world. But if you find it impracticable to draw others, save your own soul at least; I wish you to be strong in the Lord, and studious of peace.' So was the zeal of the Christian leaders at that time for the preservation of unity. Dionysius concurred with Cyprian in his views on the subject, although the flame of Christian piety was considerably lowered since the days of Ignatius, I see not a shadow of proof that there was any just reason for dissent, or any superior degree of spirituality with the Novatians. If, for example, there had been many persons among them of half the piety of Cyprian, I should

probable that history would not have been silent respecting them.

To proceed with the Decian persecution. The management of this seems to have been the whole employment of the magistrates. Swords, wild beasts, pits, red-hot chairs, wheels for stretching human bodies, and talons of iron to tear them; these were at this time the instruments of pagan vengeance. Malice and covetousness in informing against Christians were eagerly and powerfully set on work during this whole short, but horrible reign: and the genius of men was never known to have had more of employment in aiding the savageness of the heart. Life was prolonged in torture, in order that impatience in suffering might effect at length, what surprise and terror could not.

Alexander, bishop of Comana, suffered martyrdom by fire. At Smyrna, Eudemon the bishop apostatized, and several unhappily followed his example. But the glory of this church, once so celebrated by the voice of infallibility, was not totally lost. The example of Pionius, one of the presbyters, was salutary to all the churches. The account of his martyrdom is, in substance, confirmed by Eusebius: nor, in general, is there anything in it improbable, or unworthy of the Christian spirit. In expectation of being seized, he put a chain about his own neck, and caused Sabina and Asclepiades to do the same, to show their readiness to suffer. Polemon, keeper of the idol-temple, came to them with the magistrates: 'Don't you know,' says he, 'that the emperor has ordered you to sacrifice?' 'We are not ignorant of the commandments,' says Pionius, 'but they are those commandments which direct us to worship God.' 'Come to the market-place,' says Polemon, 'and see the truth of what I have said.' 'We obey the true God,' said Sabina and Asclepiades.

When the martyrs were in the midst of the multitude in the market-place, 'It would be wiser in you,'

says Polemon, 'to submit and avoid the torture.' Pionius began to speak; 'Citizens of Smyrna, who please yourselves with the beauty of your walls and city, and value yourselves on account of your poet Homer; and ye Jews, if there be any among you, hear me speak a few words: We find that Smyrna has been esteemed the finest city in the world, and was reckoned the chief of those which contended for the honour of Homer's birth. I am informed that you deride those who come of their own accord to sacrifice, or who do not refuse when urged to it. But surely your admired Homer should teach you never to rejoice at the death of any man. And ye Jews ought to obey Moses, who tells you, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." And Solomon says, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth." For my part I would rather die, or undergo any sufferings, than contradict my conscience in religious concerns. Whence then proceed those bursts of laughter and cruel scoffs of the Jews, pointed not only against those who have sacrificed, but against us? They insult us with a malicious pleasure to see our long peace interrupted. Though we were their enemies, still we are men. But what harm have we done them? What have we made them to suffer? What have we spoken against? Whom have we persecuted with unjust and unrelenting hatred? Whom have we compelled to worship idols? Have they no compassion for the unfortunate? Are they themselves less culpable than the poor wretches, who, through the fear of men or of tortures, have been induced to renounce their religion?' He then addressed the Jews on the grounds of their own scriptures, and solemnly placed before the pagans the day of judgment.

The sermon bore some resemblance to Stephen's in *like circumstances*: it tended to beget conviction of

sin, and to lead men to feel their need of the divine Saviour, according to the justest views and in the soundest taste of the gospel. He spake long, and was very attentively heard; and there is reason to hope that his exertions were not in vain. The people who surrounded him said with Polemon, 'Believe us, Pionius, your probity and wisdom make us deem you worthy to live; and life is pleasant.' Thus powerfully did conscience and humanity operate in their hearts. 'I own,' says the martyr, 'life is pleasant, but I mean that eternal life which I aspire after: I do not with a contemptuous spirit reject the good things of this life; but I prefer something which is infinitely better: I thank you for your expressions of kindness: I cannot, however, but suspect some stratagem in it.'

The people continued intreating him: and he still discoursed to them of a future state. The well-known sincerity and unquestionable virtues of the man seem to have filled the Smyrneans with veneration, and his enemies began to fear an uproar in his favour. 'It is impossible to persuade you then,' said Polemon. 'I would to God I could,' says Pionius, 'persuade you to be a Christian!'

Sabina, by the advice of Pionius, who was her brother, had changed her name, for fear of falling into the hands of her pagan mistress, who, in order to compel her to renounce Christianity, had formerly put her in irons, and banished her to the mountains, where the brethren secretly supported her with nourishment. She now called herself Theodota. 'What God dost thou adore?' says Polemon. 'God Almighty,' she answered, 'who made all things; of which we are assured by his Word Jesus Christ.' 'And what dost thou adore?' speaking to Asclepiades. 'Jesus Christ,' says he. 'What, is there another God?' says Polemon. 'No,' says he, 'this is the same whom we come here to confess.' He, who worships the Trinity in Unity, will find no difficulty in

reconciling these two confessions. Let him, who does not so worship, attempt it. One person pitying Pionius, said, 'Why do you that are so learned seek death in this resolute manner!'

When carried to prison, they found there a presbyter named Lemnus, a woman named Macedonia, and another called Eutyochiana, a Montanist.

These all employed themselves in praising God, and showed every mark of patience and cheerfulness. Many pagans visited Pionius, and attempted to persuade him to renounce his religion: his answers struck them with admiration. Some persons, who, by compulsion, had sacrificed, visited them, and shed many tears. 'I now suffer afresh,' says Pionius: 'and methinks I am torn in pieces when I see the pearls of the church trod under foot by swine, and the stars of heaven cast to the earth by the tail of the dragon. But our sins have been the cause.'

The Jews, whose character of bigotry had not been lessened by all their miseries, and whose hatred to Christ continued from age to age with astonishing uniformity, invited some of the lapsed Christians to their synagogue. The generous spirit of Pionius was moved to express itself vehemently against the Jews. Among other things he said, 'They pretend that Jesus Christ died like other men by constraint. Was that Man a common felon, whose disciples have cast out devils for so many years? Could that man be forced to die, for whose sake his disciples, and so many others, have voluntarily suffered the severest punishment?' Having spoken a long time to them, he requested them to depart out of the prison.

In Asia, a merchant named Maximus, was brought before Optimus the proconsul, who inquired after his condition? 'I was born free,' said he, 'but I am the servant of Jesus Christ.' 'Of what profession are you?' 'I live by commerce.' 'Are you a Christian?' 'Though a sinner, yet I am a Christian.' While the usual process of persuasions and of tor-

tures were going forward, he exclaimed,—‘These are not torments which we suffer for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; they are wholesome unctions.’ Such was the effect of the Holy Ghost shedding the love of God in Christ abroad in the human heart! He was ordered to be stoned to death.

All this time the persecution raged in Egypt with unremitting fury. In the lower Thebais there was a young man named Paul, to whom, at fifteen years of age, his parents left a great estate. He was a person of much learning, of a mild temper, and full of the love of God. He had a married sister, with whom he lived. Her husband was base enough to design an information against him, in order to obtain his estate. Paul, having notice of this, retired to the desert mountains, where he waited till the persecution ceased. Habit, at length, made solitude agreeable to him. He found a pleasant retreat, and lived there during fourscore and ten years. At the time of his retirement he was twenty-three, and he died at the age of a hundred and thirteen. This is the first distinct account of an hermit in the Christian church. No doubt ought to be made of the genuine piety of Paul. Those who, in our days, condemn all monks with indiscriminating contempt, seem to make no allowance for the prodigious change of times and circumstances. Reflect seriously on the sort of society to which Christians were exposed in the reign of Decius. Was there a day, an hour, in which they could enjoy its comforts, or secure its benefits? Where could Christian eyes or ears direct their attention, and not meet with objects exceedingly disgusting? If Paul preferred solitude in such a season, we need not be more surprised than we are at the conduct of Elijah the prophet. But, why did he not, with the return of peace, return also to the discharge of social duties? The habit was contracted; and the love of extremes is the infirmity of human nature.

The peace of thirty years had corrupted the whole Christian atmosphere. The lightning of the Decian rage refined and cleared it. No doubt, the effects were salutary to the church. External Christianity might indeed have still spread, if no such scourge had been used ; but the internal spirit of the gospel would, probably, have been extinguished. The survivors had an opportunity of learning, in the faithfulness of the martyrs, what that spirit is ; and men were again taught, that He alone, who strengthens Christians in their sufferings, can effectually convert the heart to true Christianity. The storm, however, proved fatal to many individuals who apostatized ; and Christianity was, in that way, cleared of many false friends.

VI.—THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGNS OF GALLUS AND VALERIAN.

GALLUS soon began to disturb the peace of the Christians, though not with the incessant fury of his predecessor. A Roman presbyter, named Hyppolitus, had been seduced into Novatianism ; but his mind had not been perverted from the faith and love of Jesus. He was now called on to suffer martyrdom, which he did with courage and fidelity. Either curiosity, or a desire of instructive information, induced some persons to ask him, in the last scene of his sufferings, whether he still persisted in the communion of Novatian ? He declared, in the most explicit terms, that he now saw the affair in a new light,—that he repented of having encouraged the schism,—and that he died in the communion of the general church. Such a testimony must have weakened the influence of the schism.

In this persecution of Gallus, it was that Cornelius confessed the faith of Christ, and was banished, by the emperor, to Civita Vecchia ; which gave occasion to a congratulatory letter from Cyprian. In one part

of it he reflects on the Novatians with his usual vehemence. The rest breathes a fervent spirit of piety and charity, and throws a strong light on two historical facts, namely, that the persecution of Gallus was severe; and, that the Roman Christians bore it with becoming and exemplary fortitude.

Cyprian himself was preserved, for the use of the church, beyond the life of Gallus, as well as of Decius. Cornelius died in exile. His faithfulness in suffering for Christ evinces all along whose servant he was; otherwise, history affords little evidence respecting his character. The little specimen which we have of his writings, will induce no one to think highly of his genius or capacity.

Lucius was chosen bishop of Rome in the place of Cornelius; but was immediately driven into exile by the authority of Gallus. Cyprian congratulated him both on his promotion and on his sufferings. His exile must have been of short duration. He was permitted to return to Rome in the year 252, and a second congratulatory letter was written to him by Cyprian. He suffered death soon after, and was succeeded by Stephen. The episcopal see at Rome was then, it should seem, the next door to martyrdom.

It was not owing to any diminution of his usual zeal and activity, that the African prelate was still preserved alive, while three of his contemporaries at Rome, Fabian, Cornelius, and Lucian, died a violent death or in exile. About this time he dared to write an epistle to a noted persecutor of those times, named Demetrianus; and, with great freedom and dignity, he exposed the unreasonableness of the pagans in charging the miseries of the times upon the Christians. There will be no necessity to give any detail of his reasonings on the subject: paganism has, at this day, no defenders.

The short reign of Gallus was distinguished by so large an assemblage of human miseries, as to give a plausible colour to Cyprian's mistake of the near

The bodies of many lay in the streets, and in vain seemed to ask the pity. It was on this occasion, that the Lord spirit of Christians to show the practice of their religion; and, that Cyprian exhibited one of the most brilliant periods of his character. He gathered together his hearers, and expatiated on the subject of mercy. He exhorted them, that if they did no more than the heathen and the publicans, in showing mercy to their own,—there would be something very admirable in their conduct; but they ought to overcome evil with good, as our heavenly Father, to love their enemies, as he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

The eloquent voice of Cyprian on this subject, roused the alacrity of his hearers. Christians ranked themselves into companies, for the purpose of relieving the public distresses, and contributed largely. The poor gave what they could, namely, their labour; with extreme heat and lives. The Pagans saw with astonishment the love of God in Christ, and the opportunity of contributing to the relief of the poor.

Mortality. He, who wrote it, must have felt what all have need to feel,—how little a thing life is, how valuable the prospect of heavenly bliss!

The active as well as the passive graces of Cyprian were kept in perpetual exercise by various calamities, which happened at no great distance of time from each other. The madness of men has ever been generating the horrors and miseries of war, and there have never been wanting poets and historians to celebrate the praises of those who have most exceeded others in shedding human blood. It belongs to narrations purely Christian to record, with a modest yet firm approbation, the actions of holy men, whom the world despises, but whom the grace of God leads to the exercise of real love to God and men.—Mark another instance of Cyprian's truly Christian benevolence. Numidia, the country adjoining to Carthage, had been blessed with the light of the gospel, and a number of churches were planted in it. By an irruption of the barbarous nations, who neither owned the Roman sway, nor had the least acquaintance with Christianity, many Numidian converts were carried into captivity. Eight bishops, Januarius, Maximus, Proculus, Victor, Modianus, Nemesian, Nampulus, and Honoratus, wrote the mournful account to the prelate at Carthage. What he felt and did on the occasion, his own answer will best explain. The love of Christ, and the influence of his Holy Spirit, will appear to have been not small in the African church, from this and from the foregoing case; nor will the calamities of the times, and the scourge of persecution, seem to have been sent to them in vain.

‘ With much heart-felt sorrow and tears we read your letters, dearest brethren, which ye wrote to us in the solicitude of your love concerning the captivity of our brethren and sisters. For who would not grieve in such cases? or who would not reckon the grief of his brother his own? since the Apostle

Paul says, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the other members rejoice with it;" and elsewhere, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Therefore now the captivity of our brethren is to be reckoned our captivity; and the grief of those who are in danger, is to be reckoned as our own grief, since we are all one body. Not only our affections, but the religion of Jesus itself ought to incite us to rescue the brethren; for, since the apostle says, in another place, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" It follows, that even if our love did not induce us to help the brethren, yet, in such circumstances we ought to consider, that they which are taken captives are the temples of God, and that we ought not, by a long delay and neglect, to suffer the temples of God to remain in captivity, but to labour with all our might and quickly to show our obsequiousness to Christ our Judge, our Lord, and our God.

'Our brethren, ever ready to work the work of God, but now much more quickened by great sorrow and anxiety to forward so salutary a concern, have freely and largely contributed to the relief of the distressed captives. We have sent a hundred thousand sesterces (£781. 5s.)—the collection of our clergy and laity of the church of Carthage, which you will dispense forthwith according to your diligence. Heartily do we wish that no such thing may happen again, and that the Lord may protect our brethren from such calamities. But if, to try our faith and love, such afflictions should again befall you, hesitate not to acquaint us; and be assured of the hearty concurrence of our church with you both in prayer and in cheerful contributions.'

About this time, Cyprian wrote to an African bishop, named Cæcilius, for the purpose of correcting a practice in the administration of the Lord's Supper which had crept into some churches, of using the

instead of wine. With arguments drawn from the scriptures, he insists on the necessity of wine in the ordinance, as a proper emblem of the blood of Christ.

The appointment of Stephen to the bishopric of Rome was soon followed by the death of Gallus; who was slain, in the year 253, after a wretched reign of eighteen months.

During his reign the peace of the church of Christ seems to have been very short and precarious. But his successor Valerian, for upwards of three years, proved their friend and protector. His house was full of Christians, and he appears to have had a strong predilection in their favour.

During the tranquillity under the emperor Valerian, a council was held in Africa, by sixty-six bishops, with Cyprian at their head. The object of this assembly was, doubtless, the regulation of various matters relating to the church of Christ. These bishops had unquestionably each of them a small diocese; and with the assistance of their clergy, they superintended their respective jurisdictions according to the primitive mode of church-government. The face of Africa, which is now covered with Mahometan, idolatrous, and piratical wickedness, afforded in those days a very pleasing spectacle; for we have good reason to believe that a real and salutary regard was paid to the various flocks by their ecclesiastical shepherds. But we have no particular accounts of the proceedings of this council beyond what is contained in a letter of Cyprian, to which I shall presently advert. He mentions two points, which engaged their attention; but, it is very likely, that matters of greater importance than either of those points were then reviewed: the synod was worthy of the name of Christian: many of the bishops then present had faithfully maintained the cause of Christ during scenes of trial the most severe that can be imagined; and I know no ground for suspecting the clergy of those times to have been influenced by

schemes of political ambition for increasing their wealth or power.

A presbyter, named Victor, had been re-admitted into the church, without having undergone the legitimate time of trial in a state of penance, and also without the concurrence and consent of the people. His bishop, Therapius, had done this arbitrarily and contrary to the institutes of the former council for settling such matters. Cyprian, in the name of the council, contents himself with reprimanding Therapius; but yet confirms what he had done, and warns him to take care of offending in future.

This is one of the points. And we see hence that a strict and godly discipline, on the whole, now prevailed in the church; and that the wisest and most successful methods of recovering the lapsed were used. The authority of bishops was firm, but not despotic: and the share of the people, in matters of ecclesiastical correction and regulation, appears worthy of notice.

The other point he thus explains in the same letter addressed to Fidus: 'As to the care of infants, of whom you said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the ancient law of circumcision should be so far adhered to, that they ought not to be baptized till the eighth day; we were all of a very different opinion. We all judged that the mercy and grace of God should be denied to none. For, if the Lord says in his gospel, "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," how ought we to do our utmost, as far as in us lies, that no soul be lost! Spiritual circumcision should not be impeded by carnal circumcision. If, even to the foulest offenders when they afterwards believe, remission of sins is granted, and none is prohibited from baptism and grace; how much more should an infant be admitted, who, just born, hath not sinned in any respect, except, that being carnally produced according to

Adam, he hath, in his first birth contracted the contagion of the ancient deadly nature, and who obtains the remission of sins with the less difficulty, because not his own actual guilt, but that of another, is to be remitted.

‘ Our sentence therefore, dearest brother, in the council was, that none, by us, should be prohibited from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful and kind to all.’

We here see an assembly of sixty-six pastors, men of approved fidelity and gravity, who have stood the fiery trial of some of the severest persecutions ever known, and who have testified their love to the Lord Jesus Christ, in a more striking manner than any Antipædo-baptists have had an opportunity of doing in our days ; and, if we may judge of their religious views by those of Cyprian, and they are all in perfect harmony with him, they are not wanting in any fundamental of godliness. No man in any age more revered the scriptures, and made more copious use of them on all occasions, than he did ; and, it must be confessed, in the very best manner. For he uses them continually, for practice, not for ostentation ; for use, not for the sake of victory in argument. Before this holy assembly a question is brought, not whether infants should be baptized at all,—none contradicted this,—but, whether it is right to baptize them immediately, or on the eighth day ? Without a single negative, they all determined to baptize them immediately. This transaction passed in the year 253. Let the reader consider : if infant-baptism had been an innovation, it must have been now of a considerable standing. The disputes concerning Easter, and other very uninteresting points, show that such an innovation must have formed a remarkable æra in the church. The number of heresies and divisions had been very great. Among them all such a deviation from apostolical practice as this, must have been remarked. To me it appears

impossible to account for this state of things, but on the footing that it had ever been allowed; and therefore, that the custom was that of the first churches. Though, then, I should wave the argument drawn from that sentence of St. Paul, "If ye were your children unclean, but now they are holy," and yet it is not easy to explain its meaning by anything else than infant-baptism; I am under a necessity of concluding, that the antagonists of infant-baptism are mistaken. Yet I see not why they do not serve God in sincerity, as well as those who are differently minded. The greatest evil lies in the want of charity; and in that contentious eagerness with which singularity, in little things, is apt to be attended. Truly good men have not always been free from this; perhaps few persons, on the whole, cultivated larger and more generous views than the African prelate; yet, in one instance, we shall presently see, he was seduced into a bigotry of spirit not unlike to that which I here disapprove, and greatly lament.

Novatianism had spread into Gaul; and Marcellus, bishop of the church of Arelate, united himself to the schism. Faustinus, bishop of Lyons, and several other French bishops, wrote to Stephen of Rome on this subject. Faustinus wrote, also, concerning the same matter, to Cyprian of Carthage; who, in a letter to Stephen, supported the cause of the good church against the schismatics. These facts are mentioned, for the purpose of showing how the gospel, which had so gloriously begun at Lyons in the second century, must now have spread in France to a great degree. Contentions and schisms usually have no place, till after Christianity has taken a deep root.

The same observation may be made respecting the progress of Christianity in Spain; where, by the inscriptions of Cyriac of Ancona, it appears that the light of truth had entered in Nero's time.

Spanish bishops, Basilides and Martial, had deservedly lost their pastoral offices in the church, on account of their unfaithfulness in the persecution. Cyprian and his colleagues in council wrote to confirm their deposition. He shows that the people, no less than the clergy, were bound to abstain from communion with such characters; and he supports his argument by the directions of Moses to the children of Israel, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men." He recommends that ordinations should be performed in the sight of all the people, that they might all have an opportunity to approve or to condemn the characters of the persons ordained. He takes notice, that, in Africa, the neighbouring bishops used to meet in the place where the new bishop was to be ordained; and that there he was chosen in the presence of the people themselves, who knew fully the life and conversation of every candidate. He observes, that Sabinus, who had been substituted in the room of Basilides, had been ordained in this fair and equitable manner; and he censures Basilides for going to Rome, and for gaining, by deceit, the consent of Stephen to his being reinstated in his former dignity. Cyprian thinks, that his guilt was much aggravated by this conduct; and in regard to Martial, who, it seems had defiled himself with Pagan abominations, he insists, that his deposition ought to remain confirmed.

While these things show the unhappy spirit of human depravity bearing down the most wholesome fences of discipline, they evince, that there existed persons at that time in the Christian world, who exerted themselves, and that not without success, to preserve the purity of the church. And, if ever it should please God to affect, with due care and zeal, the hearts of those, who possess the power to reform our ecclesiastical defects and abuses, better guides and precedents than these, next to the scriptures, will scarcely be found.

In the year 254, Pupian, a Christian of distinction in Carthage, by letter accused Cyprian of ruling the church with imperious sway; and of ejecting members from it with great insolence and haughtiness. The African prelate had presided now during six years, and had signalized himself, equally in persecution and in peace, as the friend of piety, order, and discipline, and had exerted himself, in the use of every temporal and spiritual faculty, solely for the good of the falling and distempered church: he saw, by this time, the great success of his labours; and, it now behoved him to pay the tax, which eminent virtue ever does pay to slander and to envy. A tax, no doubt, exceedingly irksome and distressing; nevertheless, necessary to prevent the risings of pride, and to preserve the most eminent Christian humble before his God. Pupian believed, or affected to believe very unjust rumours, which were circulated against his pastor; and said, that the scruple of conscience, with which he was seized, prevented him from owning the authority of Cyprian. He himself had suffered during the persecution, and had been faithful; but, like Lucian, whom he, probably, resembled both in virtues and weaknesses, he was disgusted at the backwardness of Cyprian in receiving the lapsed. This malcontent heavily complained of his severity, while the Novatian party had separated from their bishop on account of his lenity. The best and wisest characters have ever been most exposed to such inconsistent charges. It does not appear that Pupian was able to raise a second sect of dissenters on opposite grounds to those of the first: and we may hope that he reflected on his error, and returned into a state of reconciliation with his bishop. A few extracts from Cyprian's answer—for we have not Pupian's letter—may throw still stronger light on the temper and principles of Cyprian, and afford us some salutary reflections.

To the charge of Pupian—that he was not pos-

sessed of humility, he answers thus: "Which of us is most deficient in humility?—I, who daily serve the brethren; and who, with kindness and pleasure, receive every one who comes to the church; or you, who constitute yourself the bishop of the bishop, and the judge of the judge appointed by God for a certain time? The Lord, in the Gospel, when it was said to him, "Answerest thou the high priest so?" still preserving the respect due to the sacerdotal character, said nothing against the high priest, but only cleared his own innocence: and St. Paul, though he might have been justified in using strong language against those who had crucified the Lord, yet answers, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the High Priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'

'Unless, indeed, you will say—that before the persecution, when you were in communion with me, I was your pastor; but that after the persecution I ceased to be so. I suppose, then, the persecution exalted you to the high honour of a witness for Christ; and, at the same time, depressed me from my office by a heavy proscription;—yet,—the very edict, which proscribed me, acknowledged my rank as a bishop: thus, even those, who believed not God who appoints the bishop, credited the devil who proscribed him.

'I speak not these things in a way of boasting, but with grief: since you set yourself up as a judge of God and his Christ, who says to the Apostles,—and, of consequence, to all the bishops, the successors of the Apostles,—"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me."—Hence heresies and schism arise and must arise, whenever persons presumptuously despise the authority of the bishop, who alone is the president of the Church.—What arrogance is this,—to call pastors to your cognizance; and unless they be acquitted at your bar,—behold,—the brethren must be pronounced to have been without a bishop for the last six years!

‘ You say that your scruples must be solved:—but Why did not those martyrs, who, full of the Holy Ghost, suffered for God and his Christ;—Why did not many of my colleagues, and many of the people, who have been illustrious for their sufferings, indulge similar scruples? Must all—as you affirm—who have communicated with me, be considered as polluted, and as having lost the hope of eternal life? Pupian alone is upright,—inviolable,—holy,—chaste: he must not mix with us: he must dwell solitary in paradise!’

He then exhorts him to return to the bosom of the church: but at the same time he informs him, that, in the matter of his re-admission, he shall be guided by intimations and admonitions from the Lord, communicated to him possibly by visions and dreams. This is a language not unusual in Cyprian: but we know too little of the mode of dispensation which the church, at that time, was under, to judge accurately concerning it; certainly the age of miracles had not then ceased; and, certainly, instruction by dreams was very much the method used by God in scripture; to reject, therefore, wholly the positive declarations of a man of Cyprian’s wisdom and veracity, would be inexcusable temerity. He repeatedly speaks of the Lord’s directions revealed to him in the manner above mentioned. If some expressions in the letter be allowed to savour of episcopal haughtiness, which was then growing in the church, the main tenor of it, nevertheless, contains nothing but what Pupian ought to have attended to most seriously. A readiness to believe stories, which tend to calumniate the worthiest pastors, is a snare which Satan has too successfully laid for the members of the church in all ages; and, doubtless, much greater circumspection is required on this head, than many are disposed to pay. The brotherly fellowship of churches depends, in a great measure, on their endeavours to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Cyprian concludes in this nervous manner: 'I have written these things with a pure conscience, and in the firm reliance on my God. You have my letters; I have yours; both will be recited in the day of judgment before the tribunal of Christ.'

The change in the disposition of Valerian towards the Christians, which took place about the year of our Lord 257, is one of the most memorable instances of the instability of human characters. In kindness to them he had surpassed all his predecessors. Even from Philip they had not experienced so much courtesy and friendship. His palace had usually been full of the followers of Jesus, and was looked on as a sanctuary. But now, after he had reigned three years, he was induced, by his favourite, Macrianus, to commence a deadly persecution. This man dealt largely in magical enchantments and abominable sacrifices; he slaughtered children, and tore out the intestines of new-born babes. The persecution of Christians was a cruel employment, worthy of a mind so fascinated with diabolical wickedness and folly, and he found in Valerian but too prompt a disciple. This fresh attack on the servants of Christ began in the year 257, and continued during the remainder of the reign of this emperor; namely, three years and a half. Stephen of Rome appears to have died a natural death about the beginning of it. For there is no evidence of his martyrdom, and therefore we want the proofs which might, in that case, have been afforded, whether his turbulent and aspiring spirit was really combined with genuine Christian affections. He was succeeded by Sixtus.

Cyprian, who had escaped two persecutions, was now made the victim of the third, though by slow degrees, and with circumstances of comparative lenity. Every thing relating to him is so interesting, that it may not be amiss to prosecute his story, in a connected manner, to his death; and to reserve the narrative of other objects of this persecution till afterwards.

He was seized by the servants of Paternus, the proconsul of Carthage, and brought into his council-chamber. 'The sacred emperors, Valerian and Gallienus,' says Paternus, 'have done me the honour to direct letters to me, in which they have decreed that all men ought to adore the gods whom the Romans adore, and on pain of being slain with the sword if they refuse. I have heard that you despise the worship of the gods; whence I advise you to consult for yourself and to honour them.' 'I am a Christian,' replied the prelate, 'and know no God but the one true God, who created heaven and earth, the sea, and all things in them. This God we Christians serve. To him we pray night and day for all men, and even for the emperors.' 'You will die the death of a malefactor if you persevere in this disposition of mind.' 'That is a good disposition which fear God,' answered Cyprian, 'and therefore it must not be changed.' 'It is the will, then, of the prince that for the present you should be banished.' 'He is no exile,' replied the bishop, 'who has God in his heart, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' Paternus said, 'Before you go, tell me—where are your presbyters: they are said to be in this city.' With much presence of mind, Cyprian reminded him of the edicts made by the best Roman princes against the practice of informers: 'they ought not, therefore, to be discovered by me: and you yourselves do not approve of men who sell themselves voluntarily to you.' 'I will make you discover them by torments.' 'By me,' the intruded bishop rejoined, 'they shall not be discovered.' 'Our princes have ordered that Christians should hold no conventicles; and whoever breaks this rule shall be put to death.' 'Do what you are ordered,' Cyprian calmly replied.

Paternus, however, was not disposed to let Cyprian. Most probably he respected the character of the man, who, by this time, must have been highly

esteemed in Africa on account of a shining series of good works. After having made some ineffectual attempts to work on his fears, he sent him into banishment to Curubis, a little town fifty miles from Carthage, situate by the sea, over against Sicily. The place was healthy, the air good, and by his own desire he had private lodgings. The citizens of Curubis, during the eleven months which he lived among them, treated him with great kindness; and he was repeatedly visited by the Christians. In this short interval Paternus died.

While the exiled prelate remained by the sea-side, serving his divine Master in holy meditations and useful actions to the best of his power and opportunity, he was informed that the persecutors had seized nine bishops, with several priests and deacons, and a great number of the faithful, even virgins and children; and after beating them with sticks, had sent them to work in the copper mines among the mountains. Every one of these bishops had been present at the last council of Carthage; their names were Nemesian, Felix, Lucius, a second Felix, Litteus, Polus, Victor, Jader, and Dativus. I cannot account for the milder treatment which Cyprian received from the Roman governors in any other way than by supposing that an extraordinary and reverential respect was paid to his superior quality, labours, and virtues.

In the year 257 Cyprian was permitted to return from exile; and he lived in a garden near Carthage, which was now providentially restored to him, though he had sold it at his first conversion. His liberal spirit would have inclined him once more to sell it for the relief of the needy, if he had not feared lest he should excite the envy of the persecutors. Here he regulated the affairs of the church and distributed to the poor what he had left. He sent messengers to Rome for the purpose of clearing up certain indistinct information which had been received concern-

ing the persecution having broken out afresh ; and he immediately communicated to the brethren the following facts, namely ; that Valerian had given orders that bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be put to death without delay ; that senators, noblemen, and knights should be degraded and deprived of their property ; and that if they still persisted in being Christians, they should lose their lives ; that women of quality should be deprived of their property and banished ; and that all Caesar's freedmen, who should have confessed, should be stripped of their goods, be chained, and sent to work on his estates. These were Valerian's directions to the senate, and he sent letters, to the same effect, to the governors of provinces. ' These letters,' said Cyprian, ' we daily expect to arrive. We stand, however, in the firmness of faith, in patient expectation of suffering, and in humble hope of obtaining, from the Lord's help and kindness, the crown of eternal life.' He mentions also the daily ferocity with which he understood, the persecution was carried on at Rome in all its horrors ; and he gives a particular instance of it, in the martyrdom of Xystus the bishop. He begs that the intelligence may be circulated through Africa ; ' that we may all think of death but not more of death than of immortality ; and that in the fulness of faith we may rather with joy than with fear, expect the approaching events.'

Galerius Maximus had succeeded Paternus in the proconsulate, and Cyprian was daily expected to be sent for. In this awful crisis a number of senators and others, considerable for their offices or their quality, came to him. Ancient friendship melted the minds of some of them towards him, and they offered to conceal him in country-places : but his soul was now thirsting for martyrdom. The uncertainty of tedious banishment could not be agreed to one who had had so much experience of that kind, and Valerian's law being expressly levelled at me

of his character, there seemed little probability left of his being long concealed. Further, I believe the generous temper of this prelate would have been hurt, if the safety of his former pagan friends had been endangered on his account. He might, therefore, hesitate to accept their offers, though according to the steady maxims of his conscientious prudence, he would by no means do any thing to accelerate his own death. Pontius his deacon tells us, that in opposition to the intemperate zeal of those who were for giving themselves up to martyrdom, Cyprian had always on this head conscientious fears lest he should displease God by throwing away his life. In fact he continued still at Carthage, exhorting the faithful, and wishing that when he should suffer martyrdom, death might find him thus employed in the service of his God. Being informed, however, that the proconsul, then at Utica, had sent soldiers for him, he was induced to comply for a season with the advice of his friends, by retiring to some place of concealment, that he might not suffer at Utica, but that if he was called to martyrdom, he might finish his life among his own people at Carthage. So he states the matter in the last of his letters to the clergy and the people. ‘Here in this concealment, I wait for the return of the proconsul to Carthage, ready to appear before him, and to say what shall be given me at the hour. Do you, dear brethren, do you agreeably to the instructions you have always received from me, continue still and quiet: let none of you excite any tumult on account of the brethren, or offer himself voluntarily to the Gentiles. He who is seized and delivered up, ought to speak. The Lord, who dwells in us, will speak at that hour: confession rather than profession is our duty.’

The proconsul returned to Carthage, and Cyprian returned to his garden. There he was seized by two officers, who had been sent with soldiers for that purpose. They obliged him to sit between themselves

in a chariot, and they conveyed him to a place named Sextus, six miles from Carthage, by the sea-side. The proconsul lodged there on account of indisposition, and he gave orders that Cyprian should be carried back to the house of the chief officer, about the distance of a stadium from the prætorium, and that the consideration of the business should be deferred till the next day. The news spread through Carthage : the celebrity of the bishop, on account of his good works drew prodigious crowds to the scene, not only of Christians, but of infidels, who revered eminent virtue in distress.

The chief officer guarded him, but in a courteous manner ; so that he was permitted to have his friends about him as usual. The Christians passed the night in the street before his lodgings ; and the benevolence of Cyprian moved him to direct a particular attention to be paid to the young women who were among the multitude. The next day the proconsul sent for Cyprian, who walked to the prætorium attended by a vast concourse of people. The proconsul not yet appearing, he was ordered to wait for him in a private place. He sat down, and being in a great perspiration, a soldier, who had been a Christian, offered him fresh clothes. ' Shall we,' says Cyprian, ' seek a remedy for that which may last no longer than to-day ? ' The arrival of the proconsul was announced, and this venerable servant of Christ was brought before him into the judgment-hall. ' Are you Thascius Cyprian ? ' ' I am.' ' Are you he whom the Christians call their bishop ? ' ' I am.' ' Our princes have ordered you to worship the gods.' ' That I will not do.' ' You would judge better to consult your safety, and not to despise the gods.' ' My safety and my strength is Christ the Lord, whom I desire to serve for ever.' ' I pity your case,' says the proconsul, ' and could wish to consult for you.' ' I have no desire,' says the prelate, ' that things should be otherwise with me, than that I may adore my God

and hasten to him with all the ardour of my soul ; for the afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' The proconsul grew red with anger, and immediately pronounced sentence of death in the following terms : ' you have lived sacrilegiously a long time ; you have formed a society of impious conspirators, you have shown yourself an enemy to the gods and their religion, and have not hearkened to the equitable counsels of our princes, you have ever been a father and a ringleader of the impious sect. You shall, therefore, be an example to the rest, that by the shedding of your blood, they may learn their duty. Let Thascius Cyprian, who refuses to sacrifice to the gods, be put to death by the sword.' ' God be praised ! ' said the martyr ; and while they were leading him away, a multitude of the people followed and cried, ' Let us die with our holy bishop.'

A troop of soldiers attended the martyr, and the officers marched on each side of him. They led him into a plain surrounded with trees, and many climbed up to the top of them to see him at a distance. Cyprian took off his mantle and fell on his knees and worshipped his God : then he put off his inner garment and remained in his shirt. The executioner being come, Cyprian ordered twenty-five golden denarii to be given to him : he himself bound the napkin over his own eyes, and a presbyter and a deacon tied his hands, and the Christians placed before him napkins and handkerchiefs to receive his blood. His head was then severed from his body by the sword.

His biographer, Pontius, represents himself as wishing to have died with him ; and, as divided between the joy of his victorious martyrdom, and sorrow, that himself was left behind.

Thus, after an eventful and instructive period of about twelve years since his conversion, after a

variety of toils and exercises among friends, and open foes and nominal Christians, by a death more gentle than commonly fell to the lot of martyrs, rested at length in Jesus the truly magnanimous and benevolent spirit of Cyprian of Carthage.

It has been already mentioned, that Cyprian heard of the death of Sixtus, bishop of Rome, a little before his own martyrdom. In pursuance of the cruel orders of Valerian, for carrying on the persecution, that prelate had been seized with some of his clergy. While they were carrying him to execution, Laurentius, his chief deacon, followed him weeping, and said 'Whither goest thou, Father, without thy son?' Sixtus said, 'You shall follow me in three days.' We may suppose him to have been possessed of the spirit of prophecy in saying this, because we are certain that miraculous gifts were as yet by no means extinct in the church: but, perhaps, the declaration was not out of the reach of common sagacity, from the circumstances of affairs.

After Sixtus's death, the Prefect of Rome, moved by an idle report of the immense riches of the Roman church, sent for Laurentius, and ordered him to deliver them up. Laurentius replied, 'Give me a little time to set every thing in order, and to take an account of each particular.' The Prefect granted him three days' time. In that space, Laurentius collected all the poor who were supported by the Roman Church, and going to the Prefect, said, 'Come, behold the riches of our God; you shall see a large court full of golden vessels.' The Prefect followed him, but seeing all the poor people, he turned to Laurentius with looks full of anger. 'What are you so displeased at?' said the martyr:—'The gold, you so eagerly desire, is but a vile metal taken out of the earth, and serves as an incitement to all sorts of crimes: the true gold is that Light whose disciples these poor men are. The misery of their bodies is an advantage to their souls; sin is the real disease of

mankind: the great ones of the earth are the truly poor and contemptible. These are the treasures which I promised you; to which I will add precious stones. Behold these virgins and widows; they are the church's crown; make use of these riches for the advantage of Rome, of the emperor, and of yourself.'

Doubtless, if the Prefect's mind had been at all disposed to receive an instructive lesson, he would have met with one here. The liberality of Christians in maintaining a great number of objects, and in looking for no recompence but that which shall take place at the resurrection of the just, while they patiently bore affliction, and humbly rested on an unseen Saviour, was perfectly agreeable to the mind of HIM, who bids his disciples, in a well-known parable, to relieve those who cannot recompence them. How glorious was this scene! at a time when the rest of the world were tearing one another in pieces, and when philosophers made not the slightest attempts to alleviate the miseries of their fellow-creatures!—But, as the persecutors would not hear the doctrines explained, so neither would they see the precepts exemplified with patience. 'Do ye mock me?' cries the Prefect; 'I know, ye value yourselves for contemning death, and therefore you shall not die at once.' Then he caused Laurentius to be stripped, extended, and fastened to a gridiron, and, in that manner, to be broiled to death by a slow fire. When he had continued a considerable time with one side to the fire, he said to the Prefect, 'Let me be turned, I am sufficiently broiled on one side.' And when they had turned him, he looked up to heaven and prayed for the conversion of Rome; and then gave up the ghost?

I give this story at some length, because it has sufficient marks of credibility, and is supported by the evidence of Augustine.

At Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, a child, named Cyril, showed uncommon fortitude. He called on the name

of Jesus Christ continually, nor could threats or blows prevent him from openly avowing Christianity. Several children of the same age persecuted him; and his own father, with the applauses of many persons for his zeal in the support of paganism, drove him out of his house. The judge ordered him to be brought before him, and said, ‘My child, I will pardon your faults; and your father shall receive you again: it is in your power to enjoy your father’s estate, provided you are wise, and take care of your own interest.’ ‘I rejoice to bear your reproaches,’ replied the child; ‘God will receive me: I am not sorry that I am expelled out of our house, I shall have a better mansion: I fear not death, because it will introduce me into a better life.’ Divine Grace having enabled him to witness this good confession, he was ordered to be bound, and led, as it were, to execution. The judge had given secret orders to bring him back again, hoping that the sight of the fire might overcome his resolution. Cyril remained inflexible.—The humanity of the judge induced him still to continue his remonstrances. ‘Your fire and your sword,’ says the young martyr, ‘are insignificant. I go to a better house; I go to more excellent riches. Dispatch me presently, that I may enjoy them.’ The spectators wept through compassion. ‘Ye should rather rejoice,’ says he, ‘in conducting me to punishment. Ye know not what a city I am going to inhabit, nor what is my hope.’ Thus he went to his death, and was the admiration of the whole city. Such an example illustrates well that scripture—“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength.”

There were at Antioch a presbyter and a layman, the former named Sapphirus, the latter Nicephorus, who through some misunderstanding, after a remarkable intimacy, became so completely estranged, that they would not even salute each other in the street. Nicephorus after a time relented, begged forgiveness

of his fault, and took repeated measures to procure reconciliation, but in vain. He even ran to the house of Sapricius, and throwing himself at his feet, entreated his forgiveness for the Lord's sake; the presbyter continued obstinate.

In this situation of things the persecution of Valerian reached them suddenly. Sapricius was carried before the governor, and ordered to sacrifice in obedience to the edicts of the emperors. 'We Christians,' replied Sapricius, 'acknowledge for our king Jesus Christ, who is the true God, and the Creator of heaven and earth.—Perish idols, which can do neither good nor harm!' The Prefect tormented him a long time, and then commanded that he should be beheaded. Nicephorus, hearing of this, runs up to him, as he is led to execution, and renews in vain the same supplications. The executioners deride his humility as perfect folly. But he perseveres, and attends Sapricius to the place of execution. There he says further, It is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you."—But, not even the mention of the word of God itself, so suitable to Sapricius's own circumstances, could affect his obstinate and unforgiving temper.

Sapricius, however, suddenly forsaken of God, recants, and promises to sacrifice. Nicephorus, amazed, exhorts him to the contrary, but in vain. He, then, says to the executioners, 'I believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath renounced.' The officers return to give an account to the governor, who ordered Nicephorus to be beheaded.

The account ends here: but if Sapricius lived to repent, as I hope he did, he might learn what a dangerous thing it is for a miserable mortal, whose sufficiency and perseverance rest entirely on divine grace, to despise, condemn, or exult over his brother.

Dionysius of Alexandria, whom Divine Providence had so remarkably preserved in the Decian persecu-

tion, lived to suffer much also in this, but not to death. Eusebius has preserved some extracts of his writings, which not only prove this fact beyond dispute, but also throw considerable light on the effects of Valerian's persecution in Egypt.

This bishop, with his presbyter Maximus, three deacons, and a Roman Christian, was brought before Æmilian the prefect, and was ordered to recant. At the same time it was observed, that his doing so might have a good effect on others. He answered, ' We ought to obey God rather than man ; I worship God, who alone ought to be worshipped.' ' Hear the clemency of the emperor,' says Æmilian ; ' you are all pardoned, provided you return to a natural duty. Adore the gods who guard the empire, and forsake those things which are contrary to nature.' Dionysius answered, ' All men do not worship the same gods, but men worship variously according to their sentiments. But we worship the One God, the maker of all things, who gave the empire to the most clement emperors Valerian and Gallienus ; and to him we pour out incessant prayers for their prosperous administration.' ' What can be the meaning,' says Æmilian, ' why ye may not still adore that God of your's,—on supposition that he is a god,—in conjunction with our gods?' Dionysius answered, ' We worship no other God.'

From this remarkable question of the prefect, it is evident, that men might have been tolerated in the worship of Jesus, if they had allowed idolaters also to be right in the main, by associating idols with the true God. The firmness of Christians, in this respect, provoked their enemies. The dislike, at this day, of the pure gospel of Christ, arises from a similar cause. Men are condemned as bigots, because they cannot allow the world at large to be right in the eyes of God.

Æmilian banished them all to a village near the desert, called Cephro. And thither Dionysius.

though sickly, was constrained to depart immediately. ‘And truly,’ says Dionysius, ‘we are not absent from the church; for I still gather such as are in the city as if I were present; absent indeed in body, but present in spirit. And there continued with us, in Cephro, a great congregation, partly of the brethren which followed us from Alexandria, and partly of them which came from Egypt. And there God opened a door to me to speak his word. Yet, at the beginning, we suffered persecution and were stoned; but at length, not a few of the pagans forsook their idols and were converted. For, here we had an opportunity to preach the word of God to a people who had never heard it before. And God, that brought us among them, removed us to another place, after our ministry was there completed. As soon as I heard that Æmilian had ordered us to depart from Cephro, I undertook my journey cheerfully, though I did not know whither we were to go; but, upon being informed that Colluthio was the place, I felt much distress, because it was reported to be a situation destitute of all the comforts of society, exposed to the tumults of travellers, and infested by thieves. My companions well remember the effect this had on my mind. I proclaim my own shame: at first I grieved immoderately. It was a consolation, however, that it was nigh to a city. I was in hopes, from the nearness of the city, that we might enjoy the company of dear brethren; and that particular assemblies for divine worship might be established in the suburbs, which indeed came to pass.’

Amidst this scantiness of information, conveyed in no great perspicuity or beauty of style, it appears, however, that the Lord was with Dionysius, and caused his sufferings to tend to the furtherance of the gospel. His confession of his own heaviness of mind does honour to his ingenuousness: and the strength of Christ was made perfect in his weakness.

At Cæsarea in Palestine, Priscus, Malcus, and Alexander, were devoured by wild beasts. These persons led an obscure life in the country; but hearing of the multitude of executions, they blamed themselves for their sloth; they came to Cæsarea, went to the judge, and obtained the object of their ambition. Our divine Master, both by precept and example, condemns such forward zeal; which, however, in these instances, we trust, was not without a real love of his name. We have seen abundantly how much like a true disciple of Christ Cyprian of Carthage conducted himself in these respects. In this same city, there likewise suffered a woman, who was said to be inclined to the heresy of Marcion; but, probably, there was not much ground for the report.

After three years employed in persecution, Valerian was taken prisoner by Sapor, king of Persia, who detained him the rest of his life, and made use of his neck when he mounted his horse; and, at length, commanded him to be flayed and salted. This event belongs rather to secular than church-history; but as it is perfectly well attested, and as no one that I know of, except Mr. Gibbon, ever affected to disbelieve the fact, it cannot but strike the mind of any one who fears God. Valerian had known and respected the Christians; his persecution must have been a sin against the light, and it is common with Divine Providence to punish such daring offences in a very exemplary manner.

After Valerian's captivity, the church was restored to rest. About the year 262, Gallienus, his son and successor, proved a sincere friend to the Christians, though, in other respects, no reputable emperor. By edicts he stopped the persecution; and he had the condescension to give the bishops his letters of licence to return to their pastoral charges. One of these letters, as preserved by Eusebius, runs thus: 'The emperor Cæsar Gallienus, to Dionysius the

bishop of Alexandria, and to Pinna and Demetrius, with the rest of the bishops. The benefit of our favour we command to be published through the world; and I have, therefore, ordered every one to withdraw from such places as were devoted to religious uses, so that you may make use of the authority of my edict against any molestation; for I have, sometime since, granted you my protection; wherefore, Cyrenius the governor of the province will observe the rescript which I have sent.' He directed also another edict to certain bishops, by which he restored to them the places in which they buried their dead.

VII.—THE REMAINDER OF THE CENTURY.

THE general history of the church of Christ, for the remaining forty years of this century, affords no great quantity of materials. After having collected them into this chapter in order, it may be proper to reserve, to a distinct consideration, the lives of some particular persons, and other miscellaneous matters, which belong not to the thread of the narrative.

We now behold a new scene; Christians legally tolerated under a pagan government for forty years! The example of Gallienus was followed by the successive emperors to the end of the century. It was violated only in one instance, the effect of which was presently dissipated by the hand of Providence. This new scene did not prove favourable to the growth of grace and holiness. In no period since the apostles was there ever so great a general decay as in this;—not even in particular instances can we discover, during this interval, much of lively Christianity.

Those, however, are not well-informed in the nature of the religion of Jesus, who suppose, that, literally, there was no persecution all this time: true Christians are never without some share of it; nor is

it in the power of the best and the mildest governments to protect men of godliness from the malice of the world in all cases. We saw an example of this when Commodus was emperor: observe another under the government of Gallienus. At Cæsarea in Palestine, there was a soldier, of bravery, of noble family, and of great opulence; who, upon a vacancy, was called to the office of centurion. His name was Marinus. But another soldier came before the tribunal, and urged, that, by the laws, Marinus was incapacitated, because he was a Christian and did not sacrifice to the emperors; and that he himself, as next in rank, ought to be preferred. Achæus the governor asked Marinus what was his religion? upon which he confessed himself a Christian. The governor gave him the space of three hours for deliberation. Immediately Theotecnus, bishop of Cæsarea, called Marinus from the tribunal, took him by the hand, led him to the church, showed him the sword that hung by his side, and a New Testament which he pulled out of his pocket; and he then bid him choose which of the two he liked best. Marinus stretched out his hand, and took up the Holy Scriptures. 'Hold fast, then,' said Theotecnus; 'Cleave to God: and Him whom you have chosen, you shall enjoy: you shall be strengthened by Him, and shall depart in peace.' After the expiration of the three hours, upon the crier's summons, he appeared at the bar, manfully confessed the faith of Christ, heard the sentence of condemnation, and was beheaded.

The greatest luminary in the church at this time was Dionysius of Alexandria. His works are lost: a few extracts of them, preserved by Eusebius, have already been given; and some few more may be here introduced. He speaks of the Sabellian heresy, which had now made its appearance, as follows:—

'As many brethren have sent their books and disputations in writing to me, concerning the impious

doctrine lately propagated at Pentapolis in Ptolemais, which contains many blasphemies against the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also much infidelity respecting his only-begotten Son, the First Begotten of every creature, and the Word Incarnate; and, lastly, much senseless ignorance relative to the Holy Ghost;—some of them I have transcribed, and sent the copies to you.'

This is the first account in existence of the origin of Sabellianism; a plausible corruption, no doubt, perhaps the most so of all those which oppose the mystery of the Trinity. But, like all the rest, it fails for want of scripture evidence, and shows itself to be only a weak attempt to lower and submit to human reason that, which was never meant to be amenable to its tribunal. The careful distinctions of Dionysius, in recounting the persons of the Trinity, were very proper in speaking of a heresy which confounds the persons, and leaves them nothing of those distinct characters, on which the nature of the doctrines of the gospel so much depends.

In the year 264, the heresy of Paul of Samosata began to excite the general attention of Christians; and, about the same time, a degeneracy both in principle and practice, hitherto very uncommon within the pale of Christianity, attracted the particular notice of all who wished well to the souls of men. Paul was the bishop of Antioch. It gives one no very high idea of the state of ecclesiastical discipline in that renowned church, that such a man should ever have been placed at its head: but it is no new thing for even sincere Christians to be dazzled with the parts and eloquence of corrupt men. The ideas of this man seem to have been perfectly secular. Zenobia of Palmyra, who, at that time styled herself Queen of the East, and reigned over a large part of the empire which had been torn from the indolent hands of Gallienus, desired his instruc-

tions in Christianity. It does not appear that her motives had any thing in them beyond philosophical curiosity. The master and the scholar were well suited to each other; and Paul taught her his own conceptions of Jesus Christ, namely, that he was, by nature, a common man like others. The irregularities of Paul's life and the heterodoxy of his doctrine could no longer be endured. There is, in fact, more necessary connexion between principle and practice than the world is ready to believe; for pure practical holiness can only be the effect of Christian truth. The bishops met at Antioch to consider his case: among these were, particularly, Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Athenodorus, who were brethren and bishops in Pontus; and Theotecnus of Cæsarea in Palestine. A number of ministers and deacons besides met together on the occasion. In several sessions the case of Paul was argued. Firmilian seems to have presided. Paul was induced to recant; and with such appearances of sincerity that Firmilian and the council believed him. The matter slept, therefore, for the present, and Paul continued in his bishopric.

It was in the same year 264, the eleventh of Gallienus, that Dionysius of Alexandria died, after having held the see seventeen years. He had been invited to the council; but pleaded in excuse his great age and infirmities: he, however, sent a letter to the council, containing his advice, and addressed the church of Antioch, without taking any notice of her bishop. This was the last service of this great and good man to the church of Christ, after having gone through a variety of hardships, and distinguished himself by his steady piety in the cause of religion. His having been a pupil of Origen in his younger years was no great advantage to his theological knowledge: it is to be regretted that our materials concerning him are so defective; but the few fragments which remain, afford the strongest marks

of unquestionable good sense and moderation, as well as of genuine piety.

Gallienus having reigned about fifteen years, Claudius succeeded; and, after a reign of two years, in which he continued the protector of Christians, Aurelian became emperor. Under him a second council was convened concerning Paul of Samosata. He dissembled egregiously; nevertheless, the intolerable corruption both of his doctrine and of his morals, was proved in a satisfactory manner; insomuch that the servants of Christ felt themselves called upon to show openly, that all regard to the person and precepts of their divine Master was not lost in the Christian world. Seventy bishops appeared at the synod, among whom Theotecnes of Cæsarea in Palestine was still one of the principal. They waited some time for the arrival of Firmilian of Cappadocia, who had been invited, and was on his way, notwithstanding his great age; but he died at Tarsus, in the year 269. He had been one of the greatest luminaries of the day, and so had Gregory Thaumaturgus of Pontus, who also died in the interval between the first and second council. The loss of these great men was, no doubt, the more severely felt on this occasion, because it was not in the power of every one, who really believed and loved the truth as it is in Jesus, to confute and expose, in a proper manner, the artifices of Paul.

Whoever has seen the pains taken at this day, by many persons of Paul's persuasion, to cover their ideas under a cloud of ambiguous expressions, and to represent themselves, when attacked, as meaning the same thing with real Christians, while, at other times, they take all possible pains, and in the most open way, to undermine the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, will not be surprised that Paul, artful, eloquent, and deceitful as he was, should be able to give a specious colour to his ideas. But there was in the council a presbyter, named Malchion, who

added to the soundness of Christian faith great skill in the art of reasoning. He had been a long time governor of the school of humanity at Antioch, and his talents and experience were of great service in this business. He so pressed the ambiguous, equivocating Paul, that he compelled him to declare himself and to disclose his most secret meanings. There needed no more to condemn him. All the bishops agreed to his deposition and exclusion from the Christian church.

No fact in church history is more certain than the deposition and exclusion of Paul; and the inference is thence demonstratively clear, that Socinianism, in the year 269, was not suffered to exist within the pale of the Christian church. I use that term, because it is now well understood, and because it fairly expresses the ideas of Paul. In truth, no injury was done to the man. He had certainly no more right to Christian preferment, than a traitor has to hold an office of trust under a legal government, and to oblige him to speak out what he really held, was no more than what justice required. Truth and openness are essential to the character of all teachers. He who is void of them deserves to be without scholars or hearers. At the same time I cannot but further conclude, that the doctrine, usually called Trinitarian, was universal in the church in those times: Dionysius, Firmilian, Gregory, Theodotus, seventy bishops, the whole Christian world, were unanimous on this head, and this unanimity may satisfactorily be traced up to the apostles.

Paul being deposed, and a new bishop being chosen in his room, an epistle was dictated by the council and sent to Dionysius of Rome and to Maximus of Alexandria, and also dispersed through the Roman world, in which they explained their own labours in this matter, the perverse duplicity of Paul, and the objections against him.

Dionysius of Rome died, also, in the year 270.

His successor, Felix, wrote an epistle to Maximus of Alexandria, in which, probably on account of Paul's heresy, he speaks thus: 'We believe that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary: we believe that he himself is the eternal God and the Word, and not a mere man, whom God took into himself in such a manner, as that the man should be distinct from him. For the Son of God is perfect God, and was also made perfect man, by being incarnate of the Virgin.'

By the favour of Zenobia, Paul, for the space of two or three years supported himself in the possession of the mother-church of Antioch, and of the episcopal house, and of course of so much of the revenues as depended not on voluntary contributions of the people. A party he doubtless had among the people: but the horror, which Socinianism then excited through the Christian world, as well as the flagitiousness of his life, render it impossible that he should have had in general the hearts of the Christians of Antioch. Zenobia was conquered by the emperor Aurelian, and then a change took place. The Christians complained: and Aurelian, considering Rome and Italy as in all things a guide to the rest of the world, ordered, that the controversy should be decided according to the sentiments of the bishops. Of course Paul was fully and effectually expelled; and we hear no more of him in history.

Aurelian hitherto had been the friend of Christians: but pagan superstition and its abettors drove him at length into measures of persecution. The Christians were in full expectation of sanguinary treatment, when his death prevented his designs, in the year 275.

Tacitus, the successor of Aurelian, after a short reign, left the empire to Probus, in whose second year, and in the year of our Lord 277, appeared the monstrous heresy of Manes, of which the fundamental principle was the admission of two first causes independent of each other, for the purpose of ex-

plaining the origin of evil. This heresy continued long to infest the church, and necessity will oblige me hereafter, if this work be continued, to take notice of it more distinctly.

After Probus, Carus and his two sons, Dioclesian began to reign in the year 284. For the space of eighteen years this emperor was extremely indulgent to the Christians. His wife Prisca and his daughter Valeria were Christians, in some sense, secretly. The eunuchs of his palace and his most important officers were also Christians, and their wives and families openly professed the gospel. Christians held honourable offices in various parts of the empire, innumerable crowds attended Christian worship, the old buildings could no longer receive them, and in all cities wide and large edifices were erected.

If Christ's kingdom had been of this world, and if its strength and beauty were to be measured by secular prosperity, we should here fix the æra of its greatness. But, on the contrary, the æra of its actual declension must be dated in the pacific part of Dioclesian's reign. During this whole century the work of God, in purity and power, had been tending to decay. The connexion with philosophers was one of the principal causes. Outward peace and secular advantages completed the corruption. Ecclesiastical discipline, which had been too strict, was now relaxed exceedingly ; bishops and people were in a state of malice. Endless quarrels were fomented among contending parties, and ambition and covetousness had, in general, gained the ascendancy in the Christian church. Some there doubtless were who mourned in secret, and strove in vain to stop the abounding torrent of the evil. The truth of this account seems much confirmed by the extreme dearth of real Christian excellences after the death of Dionysius. For the space of thirty years, no one seems to have arisen like Cyprian, Firmilian, Gregory, or Dionysius. No bishop or pastor, eminent for piety, zeal, and labour.

Eusebius, indeed, mentions the names and characters of several bishops, but he extols only their learning and philosophy, or their moral qualities. He speaks with all the ardour of affection concerning a minister in Cæsarea of Palestine, named Pamphilus ; but in this case also, the best thing he asserts of him is, ‘ that he suffered much persecution and was martyred at last.’ Notwithstanding this decline both of zeal and of principle, notwithstanding this scarcity of evangelical graces and fruits, still Christian worship was constantly attended, and the number of nominal converts was increasing : but the faith of Christ itself appeared now an ordinary business ; and here terminated, or nearly so, as far as appears, that great first effusion of the Spirit of God, which began at the day of pentecost. Human depravity effected throughout a general decay of godliness ; and one generation of men elapsed with very slender proofs of the spiritual presence of Christ with his church.

The observation of Eusebius, who honestly confesses this declension, is judicious : ‘ the heavy hand of God’s judgments began softly, by little and little, to visit us after his wonted manner. The persecution which was raised against us, took place first among the Christians who were in military service, but we were not at all moved with his hand, nor took any pains to return to God. We heaped sin upon sin, judging, like careless Epicureans, that God cared not for our sins, nor would ever visit us on account of them. And our pretended shepherds, laying aside the rule of godliness, practised among themselves contention and division.’ He goes on to observe, that the ‘ dreadful persecution of Dioclesian was then inflicted on the church, as a just punishment and as the most proper chastisement for their iniquities.’

But before we proceed onward, we must pause for a few moments, in order to do justice to three remarkable persons, whose history belongs to the period we are quitting.

Gregory Thaumaturgus was born at Neocæsarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia. His father, zealous for paganism, took care to educate him in idolatry, and in the learning of the Gentile world. He died when his son was only fourteen years of age. The mother of Thaumaturgus took care, however, to complete his education and that of his brother Athendorus, who was afterwards a Christian bishop, as well as himself. He travelled to Alexandria to learn the Platonic philosophy, where he was equally remarkable for strictness of life and for close attention to his studies. The renowned Origen, at that time, gave lectures, in religion and philosophy, at Cæsarea in Palestine. Thaumaturgus, his brother Athendorus, and Firmilian, a Cappadocian gentleman, with whom he had contracted an intimate friendship, put themselves under his tuition. This same Firmilian is the Cappadocian bishop, whom we have repeatedly had occasion to mention. The two brothers continued five years with Origen, and were persuaded by him to study the holy scriptures ; and no doubt is to be made, but that the most assiduous pains were exerted by that zealous teacher to ground them in the belief of Christianity. On his departure he delivered an eloquent speech in praise of Origen, before a numerous auditory : a testimony at once of his gratitude and of his powers of rhetoric.

There is still extant a letter written by Origen to Gregory Thaumaturgus, in which he exhorts him to apply his knowledge to the promotion of Christianity. The best thing in it is, that he advises him to pray fervently and seriously for the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Being now returned to Neocæsarea, he gave himself much to prayer and retirement ; and, doubtless, was, in secret, prepared and disciplined for the important work to which he was soon after called. Neocæsarea was a large and populous city, full of idolatry, the very seat of Satan ; so that Christianity

could scarcely gain any entrance into it. Phædimus, bishop of Amasea, a neighbouring city, was grieved to see its profaneness; and hoping much from the piety and capacity of young Gregory, he took pains to engage him there in the work of the ministry. Gregory, from pure modesty, endeavoured to elude his designs; but was at length prevailed on to accept the charge.

The scene was arduous. He had a church to found, before he could govern it. There were not above seventeen professors of Christianity in the place. His name-sake of Nyssen seems to have been imposed on by the superstitious spirit, then too prevalent, when he tells us that Gregory Thaumaturgus received, in a vision, a creed from John the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary. But as he assures us, that the original, written with his own hand, was preserved in the church of Neocæsarea in his time; and, as this is a matter of fact of which any person might judge; as the creed itself contains nothing but what is very agreeable to the language of the fathers of the third century; and, as we have already seen the exact and steady pains with which they guarded the doctrine of the Trinity against heresies, I do not hesitate to conclude that he either actually composed the creed in question, or received it as his own; at the same time the intelligent reader, when he has considered its contents, and the consequences deducible from them, need not to be in the least surprised at the industry with which, in our times, its credit has been impeached. The whole creed is as follows, and merits our attention the more, because the orthodoxy of Gregory has been unreasonably suspected, against the express testimony of Eusebius, who, we have seen above, represents him as one of the opposers of Paul of Samosata, at the first council.

‘ There is one God, The Father of the living Word, of the subsisting wisdom and power, and of Him who is his eternal express Image: The perfect Father

of Him that is perfect: The Father of the only-begotten Son. There is one Lord, the only Son of the only Father; God of God; the Character and Image of the Godhead; the energetic Word; the comprehensive Wisdom by which all things were made; and the Power that gave Being to all creation: The true Son of the true Father: The Invisible of the Invisible: The Incorruptible of the Incorruptible: The Immortal of the Immortal: The Eternal of the Eternal. There is one Holy Ghost, having his subsistence of God; who was manifested through the Son to men; The perfect Image of the perfect Son; The Life, and the Source of Life: the Holy Fountain, Sanctity, and the Author of Sanctification; by whom is made manifest God the Father, who is above all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all. A perfect Trinity, which, neither in Glory, Eternity, or Dominion, is separated or divided.'

Notwithstanding the prejudices, which his idolatrous countrymen must have had against him, he was received by Musonius, a person of consequence in the city; and, in a very little time, his preaching was so successful that he was attended by a numerous congregation. The situation of Gregory, so like that of the primitive Christian preachers, in the midst of idolatry, renders it exceedingly probable that he was, as they were, favoured with miraculous gifts: for these the Lord bestowed in abundance, where the name of Jesus had as yet gained no admission; and, it is certain that miracles had not then ceased in the church.

Gregory Nyssen himself lived within less than a hundred years after Gregory Thaumaturgus; and both he and his brother, the famous Basil, speak of his miracles without the least doubt. Their aged grandmother, Macrina, who taught them in their youth, had, in her younger years, been a hearer of Gregory. Basil particularly observes, that she told them the very words which she had heard from him;

and assures us that the Gentiles, on account of the miracles which he performed, used to call him a second Moses. The existence of his miraculous powers, with reasonable persons, seems then unquestionable.

In the reign of Gallienus, the Christians suffered extremely from the ravages of barbarous nations, which gave occasion to Gregory's Canonical Epistle, still extant, in which, rules of a wholesome, penitential, and disciplinarian nature are delivered.

The last service which is recorded of him, is the part which he took in the first council concerning Paul of Samosata. He died not long after. A little before his death he made a strict inquiry, whether there were any persons in the city and neighbourhood still strangers to Christianity; and being told there were about seventeen in all, he sighed, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, appealed to God, how much it troubled him that any of his fellow-townsmen should still remain unacquainted with salvation. At the same time he expressed great thankfulness, that, whereas at first he had found only seventeen Christians, he should now only leave that same number of idolaters. Having prayed for the conversion of infidels, and for the edification of the faithful, he peaceably gave up his soul to the Almighty.

It is not easy to fix, with precision, the time when Theognostus of Alexandria lived; though it is certain that he is later than Origen, and that he must belong to the third century. He platonizes, after the manner of Origen, in some parts of his writings; yet, he is cited by Athanasius as a witness of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father. 'For, as the sun is not diminished,' says he, 'though it produces rays continually, so likewise the Father is not diminished in begetting the Son, who is his image.' It is certain that this is Trinitarian language; and, though neither Theognostus nor Gregory, nor some others of the ancient fathers, spake always of the Persons of the

blessed Trinity, with so much exactness as afterwards was done, it would be an extreme want of candour to rank them with Arians, Sabellians, or the like, when there is the clearest proof that the foundation of their doctrine was really Trinitarian.

We have before observed, that Dionysius of Alexandria, through his zeal against the sentiments of Sabellius, became suspected of Arianism; and, that he fully exculpated himself. A Roman synod had been convened on that account, and Dionysius of Rome, in the name of the synod, wrote a letter, in which he proves that the Word was not created, but begotten of the Father from all eternity; and distinctly explains the mystery of the Trinity. Such extreme nicety of caution in steering clear of two rocks like those of Sabellianism and Arianism, between which, it must be confessed, the passage is narrow and straight, demonstrates, that the true doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, which, with so much clearness, as to the existence of the thing itself, though, necessarily, with perfect obscurity as to the manner of the existence, discovers itself every where in the scriptures, was even then understood with precision, and maintained with firmness, throughout the church of Christ.

In the reign of Decius, and in the midst of his persecution, about the year 250, the gospel, which had hitherto been chiefly confined to the neighbourhood of Lyons and Vienne, was considerably extended in France. Saturninus was the first bishop of Toulouse, and, at the same time, several other churches were founded; as at Tours, Arles, Narbonne, and Paris. The bishops of Toulouse and Paris afterwards suffered for the faith of Christ; but they left churches, in all probability, very flourishing in piety. And France, in general, was blessed with the light of salvation.

Germany was also, in the course of this century.

favoured with the same blessing, especially those parts of it which are in the neighbourhood of France. Cologne, Treves, and Metz, particularly, were evangelized.

Of the British Isles little is recorded; and that little is obscure and uncertain. It is rather from the natural course of things, and from analogy, than from any positive unexceptionable testimony, that we are induced to conclude that the divine light must have penetrated into our country.

During the miserable confusions of this century, some teachers from Asia went to preach the gospel among the Goths who were settled in Thrace. Their holy lives and miraculous powers were much respected by these barbarians; and, many of them, from a state perfectly savage, were brought into the light and comfort of Christianity.

The wisdom and goodness of God so ordered events, that the temporal miseries, which afflicted mankind in the reign of Gallienus, were made subservient to the eternal interests of his cruel, blind, and infatuated creatures. The barbarians, who ravaged Asia, carried away with them into captivity several bishops, who healed diseases, expelled evil spirits in the name of Christ, and preached Christianity. They were heard, in some places, with respect and attention; and became the instruments of the conversion of numbers. This is all that I can collect of the extension of the gospel among the barbarian ravagers.

CENTURY IV.

I.—THE PERSECUTION OF DIOCLESIAN.

THE last century concluded with some symptoms of a storm ready to burst on the church, which had long been in a state of ease and prosperity, and was at the same time deeply declined from the purity and simplicity of the gospel. Besides the martyrdom of Marcellus in Africa, an attempt had been made in a more general, and yet in a covert manner, to corrupt the army. It was put to the option of Christian officers, whether they would offer sacrifice, and enjoy their dignity, or refuse and be deprived. Many were desirous of retiring into private life, to avoid the trial. Many however showed a sincere regard to the kingdom of Christ, and contentedly lost their preferment. Some few were put to death for a terror to the rest. But the general persecution, which afterwards destroyed such numbers, was withheld for some time. In this prelude, which has been mentioned above, and of which we have only a dark and imperfect account, something of the political manœuvres of Dioclesian seems conspicuous. It is evident that after he had so long favoured the Christians, he had now contracted a prejudice against them, though at first he made use of artifice rather than violence.

This emperor had an associate called Maximian.

and they had under them two Cæsars, Galerius and Constantius. The last-mentioned only of the four was a person of probity and humanity. The other three were tyrants, though the savageness of Galerius was the most remarkable. He met Dioclesian at Nicomedia, where he usually kept his court, in the winter, in the nineteenth year of his reign, and in the year of our Lord 302, and determined, if possible, to instigate him to measures against the Christians, still more sanguinary and decisive. This man had a mother extremely bigoted to paganism, who almost every day employed herself in sacrifices. The Christians about her refused to partake of the idolatrous feasts, and gave themselves up to fasting and prayer. Hence her mind was incensed against the whole body, and she stimulated her son, who was as superstitious as herself, to seek their destruction. A whole winter Dioclesian and Galerius were engaged in secret counsels. The latter proposed a general persecution; the former remonstrated against the impolicy of such sanguinary measures, and was for limiting the persecution to the officers of the court and the soldiers. Finding himself unable to stem the fury of Galerius, he called a council of a few judges and officers. Some gave it as their opinion, that the Christians should in general be put to death; and others, induced by fear or flattery, assented. Still Dioclesian was averse, and through policy or superstition determined to consult the oracle of Apollo at Miletus. Apollo answered, as it might be expected, in a manner friendly to the views of Galerius. Staggered with repeated importunities, the old emperor still hesitated, and could not be persuaded to attempt the demolition of Christianity by bloodshed; whereas Galerius was desirous to burn alive those who refused to sacrifice to the heathen gods.

The feast of the Terminalia was the day appointed to commence the operations against the Christians. Early in the morning, an officer with guards came to

the great church at Nicomedia, and bursting open the doors, sought for the image of God. So says my author; though if this be not a mere flourish of rhetoric, they must have been strangely ignorant of the sentiments of the followers of Jesus. The scriptures which were found were burnt; every thing was given to plunder. While all things were in this confusion, the two emperors, looking at the scene from the palace, were long in doubt whether they should order the edifice to be burnt. The prudent opinion of Dioclesian at length prevailed, who feared the effect of a conflagration on the neighbouring buildings. The Pretorian soldiers were therefore sent with axes and other iron tools, and in a few hours levelled the whole building with the ground.

The next day an Edict appeared, by which men of the Christian religion, of whatever rank or degree, were deprived of all honour and dignity; were exposed to torture; and every one might have justice against them; whilst they were debarred the benefit of the laws in all cases without exception. Thus was the Christian world at once exposed to all possible insults without redress. The spirit of man naturally revolts against injustice so flagrant, and a Christian was found hardy enough, under the transports of indignation, to pull down and tear the edict. He was burned alive for his indiscretion, and bore his sufferings with admirable, and, it is to be hoped, with Christian patience.

Sometime after, a part of the palace was found to be on fire; the Christians were charged with the fact, and the eunuchs of the house were accused. Dioclesian himself was present, and saw his servants burnt in the flames. It is remarkable, that the servants of Galerius were not put to the torture; while he himself took much pains to keep up the indignation of the old emperor. After fifteen days a second fire broke out, and Galerius left the palace in a hurry, expressing his fear of being burnt alive. Lactantius, with-

out hesitation, charges all this to the artifices of Galerius.

Dioclesian now thoroughly in earnest, raged against all sorts of men who bore the Christian name, and obliged among others his wife and daughter to sacrifice. Doubtless he suspected them at least of a secret regard for Christianity. Presbyters and deacons were seized and condemned in a summary way to death. Eunuchs of the greatest power in the palace were slain, and persons of every age and sex were burnt. It was tedious to destroy men singly; fires were made to burn numbers together, and men with millstones fastened about their necks were thrown into the sea. Judges were every where at work in compelling men to sacrifice. The prisons were full. Unheard-of tortures were invented; and, to prevent the possibility of Christians obtaining justice, altars were placed in courts, at which plaintiffs were obliged to sacrifice, before their cause could be heard. The other two emperors were directed by letters to proceed in the same violent course. Maximian, who governed in Italy, obeyed with savage alacrity. Constantius with reluctance demolished the churches, while he preserved the persons of Christians.

The persecution pervaded the whole Roman world, except France, where the mild Constantius ruled; and from east to west, to use the language of Lactantius, three monsters of horrible ferocity raged. Two pillars in Spain were also monuments of the systematic cruelty of this persecution, on one of which was this inscription: 'Dioclesian, Jovian, Maximian Herculeus, Cæsares Augusti, for having extended the Roman empire in the East and West, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the republic to ruin.' On the other this: 'Dioclesian, &c. for having adopted Galerius in the East, for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods.' And to name only one more evidence, the cruelty

must have been egregious, which could have induced the persecutors to strike the medal of Dioclesian, which still remains, with this inscription, 'The name of Christians being extinguished.'

There were some ministers of the palace of the highest rank and nobility, who were yet found to prefer the reproach of Christ to all worldly grandeur. The martyrdom of Peter, one of the emperor's household, is very remarkable. He was brought before the emperor in Nicomedia, and was scourged with excessive severity. As he refused to sacrifice, though his bones were made bare by the stripes, a mixture of vinegar and salt was poured on his limbs; and this being still to no purpose, he was gradually burnt to death. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and many others, who served in the palace, after a variety of sufferings, were strangled. Anthimus, the Bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded, and with him a great multitude of martyrs suffered. Men and women leaped on the funeral piles with alacrity. With the persecution, the spirit of martyrdom was revived in the church. In every place the prisons were filled with bishops and other Christian ministers, and no room was reserved for felons. Martyrs were put to death in every province. Africa and Mauritania, Thebais, and Egypt throughout, abounded with them. Five persons of this last country Eusebius speaks of, whom he had known in Palestine and Phœnicia. He himself saw them suffering under the scourge, or exposed to enraged wild beasts, and celebrates their admirable patience. One of them, scarcely twenty years of age, stood without bonds, with his hands stretched out in a praying posture, exposed to bears and leopards, which were backward to perform the bloody task assigned them. A bull which had been stimulated by hot iron applied to him, tossed with his horns and tore his employers; and it was with some difficulty that beasts were found to execute the purposes of the persecution.

Egypt suffered extremely. Whole families were put to various kinds of death; some by fire, others by water, other by decollation, after horrible tortures. Some perished by famine, others by crucifixion, and of these, some in the common manner; others were fastened with their heads downwards, and preserved alive, that they might die by hunger. But the torments in Thebais exceed all description. Women, tied by one foot, were raised up on high, and exposed naked, monuments at once of the inhumanity and indecency of the persecution. Others were torn by the distorted boughs of trees; and these scenes continued some years. Sometimes ten, at other times thirty, and sixty, and once a hundred men and women with their little ones, in one day, were murdered by various torments.

Our author himself, while in Egypt, saw many executed in one day, some beheaded, others burnt; so that both the executioners were quite fatigued, and their weapons were blunted. The Christians suffered (he speaks what he saw himself) with the greatest faith and patience. There was even the strongest appearance of joy and triumph among them, and to their last breath they employed themselves in psalms and thanksgiving. Philoromus, a person of great dignity at Alexandria, and a man of wealth and eloquence, is recorded as one who died cheerfully for Christ at this time. Phileas also, bishop of the Thmutitæ, a man of eminence in his country, suffered in Thebais. In vain did relations, friends, magistrates, even the judge himself, exhort them to pity themselves, their wives, and children. They loved Christ above all, and were beheaded.

Phileas, some time before his own martyrdom, being at Alexandria, in prison, wrote an epistle to the Thmutitæ, his own church, concerning the sufferings of the Christians there. A fragment of which, Eusebius has preserved to us, which may not only illustrate the nature of the persecution, but also the

spirit and views of the writer and other good men of that time. 'The martyrs fixing sincerely the eye of their mind on the supreme God, and cheerfully embracing death for the sake of godliness, beld immovably their calling, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ was made man for us, that he might cut down all sin, and might afford us the necessary preparatives for an entrance into eternal life.' He then quotes the well-known passage concerning the proper deity and humiliation of Christ, in the second chapter to the Philippians. Coveting the best gifts, the martyrs, who carried Christ within, underwent all sorts of tortures once and again. And while the guards insulted them in word and deed, they were preserved serene and unbroken in spirit, because "perfect love casteth out fear." But what eloquence can do justice to their fortitude? Free leave was given to any to injure them; some beat them with clubs, others with rods, some scourged them with thongs of leather, others with ropes. Some, having their hands tied behind them, were hung about a wooden engine, and every limb of their bodies was distended by certain machines. The torturers rent their whole bodies with iron nails, which were applied, not only to the sides, as in the case of murderers, but also to their bellies, their legs, and their cheeks; others were suspended by one hand to a portico, and underwent the most severe distention of all their joints; others were bound to pillars, face to face, their feet being raised above ground, that their bonds being distended by the weight of their bodies, might be the closer drawn together, and this they endured almost a whole day without intermission. The governor ordered them to be bound with the greatest severity, and when they breathed their last, to be dragged on the ground. No care, said he, ought to be taken of these Christians; let all treat them as unworthy of the name of men. Some, after they had been scourged, lay in the stocks, both their feet being stretched to

the fourth hole ; so that they were obliged to lie with their faces upward, unable to stand on account of the wounds caused by the stripes. Some expired under their tortures. Others having been recovered by methods taken to heal them, and being reduced to the alternative of sacrificing or dying, cheerfully preferred the latter. For they knew what was written, " Whosoever sacrificeth to other gods, shall be destroyed," and " Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

Such, says Eusebius, are the words of a martyr, a true lover of wisdom and of God, which, before the definitive sentence of his execution, he sent to the brethren of his own church.

One city in Phrygia being generally Christian, was besieged by armed men, and set on fire. The men with their wives and children were burnt to death, calling upon Christ, the God over all. All the inhabitants, magistrates and people, nobles and plebeians, professing Christianity, were ordered to sacrifice, and for refusing, suffered in this manner.

One Adautus, a Christian, of the highest dignity, who held at that time an office of great importance, was honoured also with the crown of martyrdom. Some were slain by axes, as in Arabia ; some by breaking the legs, as in Cappadocia ; some suspended by the feet, with the head downward, over a slow fire, were suffocated, as in Mesopotamia ; some were mutilated and cut in pieces, as at Alexandria. Some were burnt to death, in a very gradual manner at Antioch. Some, to avoid falling into the hands of their enemies, committed suicide by throwing themselves down from the tops of houses : lamentable instances of impatience. But the reader will remember, that the decline had been very great from Christian purity : that so many should suffer like Christians in so dull a time, can scarcely be accounted for, but on the idea of the Lord's reviving his work and administering the Holy Spirit amidst

their afflictions. I cannot commend the conduct of a lady of Antioch, or that of her two daughters, who, to avoid the licentious brutality of the soldiers, drowned themselves. Two other virgins in the same city of Antioch, persons of quality, and of great piety, died in a much more Christian manner, being thrown into the sea by the persecutors.

In Pontus, sharp reeds were thrust under the nails into the fingers of some; the backs of others were scorched by melted lead; some in their bowels and privy parts suffered inexpressible torments; the judges exercising ingenious malice in the daily invention of new punishments.

Wearied at length with murder, and affecting to praise the clemency of the emperors, who were desirous to save life, they contented themselves with plucking out eyes, and cutting off one of the legs. The number of those who suffered in this way was inexpressible; and they were afterwards condemned to work in the mines.

Lucian, a holy and exemplary presbyter of Antioch, had the honour to apologise for Christianity at Nicomedia, in the presence of the emperor, and afterwards to suffer. Tyrannio, bishop of Tyre, was thrown into the sea. Zenobius, a presbyter of Sidon, and an excellent physician, expired serene in tortures. Sylvanus, bishop of Emesa, with some others, was exposed to the wild beasts. Peleus and Nilus, Egyptian bishops, with others, were burnt to death. Peter, bishop of Alexandria, suffered also, together with Faustus, Dius, and Ammonius, his presbyters. Other Egyptian bishops are mentioned also by Eusebius, who leaves the celebration of the rest to those who saw their sufferings, contenting himself with a more particular account of those whom he knew, and of those facts of which he had ocular demonstration.

As infidel writers have taken pains to depreciate the authenticity of these facts, it seemed proper to give the reader a just picture of them from Eusebius.

and to submit to his determination, whether there be any internal evidences of falsehood in his narration. In addition to what has been shown already from Lactantius, and ancient memorials, it may with justice be said, in favour of the credibility of the writer, whose character as a historian of veracity is before us, that he is large and circumstantial in scenes of which he was a spectator; succinct and general, where he had no opportunity of knowing the circumstances. Of the martyrs of Palestine, his own country, he has given us a copious narrative, a specimen of which must now be delivered, containing those whose martyrdom fell within the period of Dioclesian's reign. The rest must be considered hereafter. Procopius was the first of these martyrs, who being brought before the tribunal, and ordered to sacrifice to the gods, declared that he knew only one God, to whom he ought to sacrifice in the manner which he has appointed. Being then ordered to make libations to the four emperors, he repeated a verse of Homer, which by no means pleased the persecutors, as implying a censure of the present government. Upon this, he was beheaded immediately. Whether the empire was benefitted by the appointment of four emperors instead of one, is a question of politics, which it certainly became not the martyr to enter upon, especially on that occasion. And it is the only instance of deviation into secular matters, which I remember to have seen in primitive Christians as yet. It might be only a sally of imprudent vivacity, but even so it was extremely ill-timed. Galerius, in whose dominions he said this, would probably hear of it; and this fiercest of all the persecutors, needed not the addition of such an incentive to inflame his wrath against the Christians.

After him, in the same city, Cæsarea of Palestine, very many bishops of the neighbouring churches, suffered grievous torments; others, through fear, recanted at the first onset. The rest underwent a

variety of punishments. Yet some pains were taken to save the reputation of the gods, and to preserve the lives of Christians at the same time.

One was dismissed, as if he had sacrificed, though he was dragged to the altar, and a sacrifice was put into his hand by violence. Another went away in silence; some persons, with a humane falsehood, testifying that he had complied. One was thrown out as dead, after he had been tortured, though yet alive. Another protesting against what was exacted of him, many beating him in the mouth, with a view to compel him to silence, was thrust out of the court. Alpheus and Zacchæus alone of all these bishops of Palestine, suffered death at this time. Tortured for twenty-four hours, after having undergone excessive severities before, they manfully confessed one only God, and one only Saviour Christ, and were at last beheaded.

On the same day at Antioch, Romanus, a deacon of the church of Cæsarea, was martyred. Happening to enter Antioch at the very time when the churches were demolished, he saw many men and women, with their little ones, crowding to the temples and sacrifices, most probably Christian apostates. The same spirit which moved Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, on a like occasion, was felt by Romanus, but exerted in a manner more agreeable to the Christian dispensation. He cried aloud, and rebuked their cowardice and perfidy. But being seized immediately, and condemned to the flames, and fastened to the stake, while the executioners expected the definitive order from the emperor then present, (Galerius most probably,) he asked cheerfully, Where is the fire for me? Cæsar, provoked at his boldness, ordered his tongue to be cut out. He put out his tongue with great readiness. After this punishment he was thrown into prison, and suffered there a considerable time. His feet were exposed to an unnatural distention, and in the end he was dis-

missed out of life by strangling. This happened during the first year of the persecution, while it raged only against the governors of the church.

In the second year, when the persecution grew hotter, imperial letters were sent into Palestine, commanding all men, without exception, to sacrifice. At Gaza, Timotheus, after many sufferings, was consumed by a slow fire; Agapius and Thecla were condemned to the wild beasts. At this time, when many apostatized to save their lives, there wanted not also some instances of an excessive forwardness. Six persons at Cæsarea, with their hands bound, ran to Urbanus the judge, and offered themselves for martyrdom. They suffered in conjunction with two others, whose spirit and circumstances, in the manner of their departure out of life, were more conformable to the rules of the gospel.

Power being now communicated to the governors of the different provinces to punish the Christians freely, each exercised it as his particular temper dictated. Some, for fear of displeasing, did even more than they were ordered. Some felt the impulse of their own enmity against godliness; others indulged a natural savageness of disposition; there were who saw, that to shed blood profusely, was the high-road to preferment. There were those, (and Lactantius looks on them as of the worst sort,) who determined to torment, and not to kill. Such persons studied those arts of torture, which might keep life still in being amidst the keenest sensations of pain. Eusebius tells us, that he himself heard some of this sort boasting, that their administration was not polluted with blood, and that he saw a Bithynian governor exulting, as if he had subdued a nation of barbarians, because one person, after two years' resistance, had yielded to the force of torments. Much pains were taken also with the tortured, to recover them, that they might be strengthened to endure new punishments. A considerable part of

Roman jurisprudence was now employed on this subject. The constitutions of the law on this head had been published and commented on by the famous lawyer Ulpian, and were considered as serious objects of study by civilians.

At no time since the beginning of Christianity, was so systematical and so laboured an effort made to extinguish the gospel of Christ. Satan had great wrath, as if he had foreseen that he should have but short time; and when we consider how poorly provided the church was for this fiercest of all the invasions she had ever met with, we shall see cause to admire the grace of God, who yet furnished out a noble army of martyrs in a time of so great evangelical declension; and, in the end, more effectually than ever, baffled the designs of Satan.

In addition to other methods of persecution, the powers of genius and the arts of eloquence were introduced. Cyprian alone, of the Latin writers, was capable of pleasing the taste of the learned among the Pagans. A certain person of taste among them was heard by Lactantius, to call him Coprianus, because he employed an elegant genius, adapted to better things, in the support of old wives' fables. In so contemptible a light did the gospel appear to the learned of that day, even when clothed in the dress of the eloquent Cyprian! but how much more contemptible in the hands of the generality of Christian teachers, who were destitute of the powers of argument and of language.

Encouraged by the favour of the emperors, and the apparently ruined state of Christendom, at the very time when the persecution raged in Bithynia, two writers appeared who insulted the Christians. One, whose name Lactantius does not give us, was a philosopher, and like many preachers of morality in all ages, a defender of virtue, and a practitioner of vice, a flatterer of the court, very rich, and very corrupt, one who condemned his own practice by his moral

writings, and who dealt largely in the praises of the emperors, on account of their great piety in supporting the religion of the gods. Yet all men condemned his meanness in choosing that time particularly to write against the Christians, nor did he obtain the favour at court which he expected.

The other writer, Hierocles, was doubtless a man of parts and talents. He was a virulent enemy of the gospel, had great influence in promoting the persecution; and from being a judge in Nicomedia was promoted to the government of Alexandria. He attempted to compare the feigned miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus with those of Jesus Christ. This man wrote with an air of candour and humanity of the Christians, while his actions against them were fierce and bloody.

In France alone, and its neighbourhood, the people of God found some shelter. Yet was the mild Constantius, to save appearances with his superior Maximian, induced to persecute, not only by destroying the temples, as was mentioned, but also by threatening those of his own household who would not renounce Christianity. The Christians of his family were tried by such means. But the event was contrary to their expectations. Constantius retained the faithful, and dismissed the apostates, judging that those who were unfaithful to their God would also be disloyal to their prince.

At Cirta in Numidia, Paul, the bishop, ordered a sub-deacon to deliver up the treasures of the church to a Roman officer. The Holy Scriptures and the moveables of this society of Christians were surrendered by the perfidy or cowardice of those who ought to have protected them. But God reserved some, who were endowed with courage and zeal, at the hazard of their lives, to take care of the sacred writings, and baffle the intention of the persecutors, which doubtless was to destroy all records of Christianity among men. Felix of Tibiura, in Africa

being asked to deliver up the scriptures, answered, 'I have them, but will not part with them.' He was condemned to be beheaded. 'I thank thee, O Lord,' says this honest martyr, 'that I have lived fifty-six years, have kept my virginity, have preserved the gospel, and have preached faith and truth. O my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth, I bow my head to be sacrificed to thee, who livest to all eternity.' I judge it not amiss to distinguish this man in the narrative. The preservation of civil liberty is valuable, and the names of men who have suffered for it with integrity are recorded with honour. But how much below the name of Felix of Tibiura should these be accounted! He is one of those heroes who have preserved to us the precious word of God itself. In Abitina, in Africa, forty-nine manfully perished through hunger and ill treatment. In Sicily, Euplius a martyr being asked, 'Why do you keep the scriptures, forbidden by the emperors?' answered, 'Because I am a Christian. Life eternal is in them; he that gives them up loses life eternal.' Let his name be remembered with honour, together with that of Felix. He suffered also in the same cause. Various martyrs suffered in Italy. For Maximian was to the full as much disposed to persecute as Dioclesian.

In the year 304 or 305, a civil change took place in the empire, which paved the way for very important changes in the church, though the persecution continued still for some time. Dioclesian resigned the empire, and Maximian followed his example, though with no great cordiality. They were succeeded by Galerius in the East (who ruled in the room of Dioclesian, and put Maximin his nephew in his own place), and in the West by Constantius.

Maximin inherited the savageness and the prejudices of his uncle; and in Palestine and in the more eastern parts, over which Galerius had ruled, he still continued the horrors of the persecution:

about the fourth year of which happened the martyrdom of Agapius at Cæsarea. Maximin Cæsar was there exhibiting spectacles in honour of his birthday. The ferociousness of the pagans was doubtless much augmented by the usual barbarous sports; and the native enmity of the mind against godliness met not with with so many checks of humanity, in times of persecution, as it would in our days of civilization. But it should be remembered, that it was not philosophy, but the Gospel, which improved, in this as well as other respects, the morality of the Roman empire. Agapius, who had been thrice before brought on the stage, and had thrice been respited by the compassion of the judge, was now brought before the emperor, to fulfil, says Eusebius, that word of Christ, "ye shall be brought before kings for my name's sake." A slave who had murdered his master was produced at the same time, and condemned to the wild beasts. The emperor, with a view to distinguish his birth-day by an act of generosity, both pardoned and gave freedom to the murderer. The whole amphitheatre rang with acclamations in praise of his clemency. But it was perfectly in character for Maximin to punish the innocent and to spare the guilty. He asked Agapius if he would renounce Christianity, promising him liberty on that condition. The martyr expressed his cheerful readiness to undergo any punishment, not for any crime committed by him, but for fidelity towards the Lord of the universe. He was condemned to be torn by a bear, and still breathing, was carried back to prison; where after he had lived a day, he was sunk in the sea with weights fastened to his feet. The exclamation of the Jews, in the history of our Saviour, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" naturally occurs to Eusebius on this occasion.

In the fifth year of the persecution, a Tyrian virgin, Theodosia, not quite eighteen years old, was put to death for owning and countenancing some Christian

prisoners. The judge, Urbanus, afterwards condemned them to the mines of Palestine. Silvanus a presbyter, afterwards a bishop, with some others, was doomed to the labour of the brass mines, the joints of their feet being first weakened by the application of hot iron.

Few persecutors exceeded Urbanus in malice and activity. He doomed three to fight with one another; Auxentius, a venerable old saint, he condemned to the beasts. Some of them he condemned to the mines, after he had made them eunuchs. Others, after bitter torments, he threw into prison again.

If any be still inclined to regard the calculation of those, who represent the number of the martyrs as small, let him consider, that it was evidently very much the policy of this, and most probably of the former persecutions, to torment Christians without destroying them. The emperors did not wish to rob themselves of such a number of subjects, but to subdue them to their will. Yet in many instances the human frame must have sunk under these hardships; and the multitude of Christian sufferers on this account, in addition to the evils of poverty and flight, must exceed all powers of calculation.

Urbanus tortured, among others, the famous Pamphilus, the friend of Eusebius; but lived not to see his martyrdom. Being himself convicted of crimes, Urbanus was capitally punished in Cæsarea, the scene of his cruelties, and by the same Maximin, of whose imperial savageness he had been the minister.

In the sixth year of the persecution, of the great multitude of Christian sufferers in Thebais, near a hundred were selected to be sent to Palestine, and were adjudged by Firmilian, the successor of Urbanus, to be lamed in the left foot, and to lose the right eye, and in that state to be condemned to the mines. The three persons also, who had been condemned to fight with one another, for refusing to learn the new business of a gladiator imposed on

them, were doomed by Maximin himself, with some others, to the same punishments as the persons transported from Thebias. Some persons were apprehended at Gaza for meeting together to hear the scriptures read, and were punished with the loss of a limb, and an eye, or in a still more cruel manner. Two women, after sustaining horrible torments, were put to death. The former being menaced with the loss of chastity, burst out into expressions of indignation against the tyrant Maximin, for employing such judges. The latter being dragged by force to an altar, threw it down. But there were Christians of a higher class, better informed in their duty, and more possessed of the mind of Christ. A person, named Paul, being sentenced to lose his head, begged to be allowed a short space of time. His request being granted, he prayed with a loud voice for the whole Christian world, that God would forgive them, remove the present heavy scourge of their iniquities, and restore them to peace and liberty: he then prayed for the Jews, that they might come to God and find access to him through Christ. In the next place, he prayed that the same blessings might be vouchsafed to the Samaritans. The Gentiles, who lived in error and in ignorance of God, were the next objects of his charitable petitions, that they might be brought to know God and to serve him: nor did he omit to mention the crowd about him, the judge who had sentenced him, the emperors, and the executioner, and in the hearing of all he prayed that their sins might not be laid to their charge. The whole company was moved, and tears were shed. The martyr composed himself to suffer, and offering his neck to the sword, he was beheaded. An admirable Christian hero! in whom divine love breathed in conjunction with resignation and serenity. The Lord's hand was not shortened. His grace appeared in him in a manner worthy of the Apostolic age. Soon after a hundred and thirty Egyptian chieftains,

suffering the same mutilations which have been mentioned above, were sentenced by Maximin to the mines of Palestine and Cilicia.

After the persecution had paused for some time, it was renewed with fresh violence by the edicts of Maximin. The temples were repaired, men were compelled to sacrifice every where; all things sold in the markets were polluted with libations, and persons were placed at the public baths to force men to idolatrous compliances. Three believers, Antoninus, Zebinus, and Germanus, threw themselves into the hands of Firmilian, and were capitally punished. Eusebius, in his usual manner, commends their overforward zeal. With them a virgin called Ennathus, was dragged by violence to the judge, whipped, and burned to death. Their bodies were left exposed to the beasts of prey, and particular care was taken to prevent their interment. Sometime after, certain Egyptians coming to minister to the confessors of their own country, who had been condemned to the mines in Cilicia, one of them was burned, two were beheaded, and several were associated with the confessors in their afflictions, mutilations, and the drudgery of the mines. Peter the monk, having in vain been solicited by the judge to save his life, gave it up cheerfully for the sake of Christ. With him suffered Asclepius, bishop of the Marcionites, being burned on the same funeral pile, 'animated with zeal,' says my author, 'but not according to knowledge.' This however might be more than Eusebius knew. The heretical form in which he appeared, might be consistent with the pure love of Christ: in a history which undertakes impartially to celebrate the people of God, it does not become us to be blinded by the idea of a rigorous and exclusive uniformity of denomination.

Pamphilus the presbyter, and friend of Eusebius, is highly commended by him for his contempt of secular grandeur, to which he might have aspired,

for his great liberality to the poor, and for that which may seem more likely to cloud than to adorn his Christian excellences, his philosophic life; above all, for his knowledge of the holy scriptures, in which his panegyrist thinks he excelled all men of that time; and for his benevolence to all who came to him. An excellent Christian he undoubtedly was, though a moderate degree of evangelical knowledge in that age would easily be esteemed prodigious. Firmilian asking him, when brought before him, what was his country, received for answer, 'Jerusalem.' Not understanding what he meant by this, he tortured him for an explanation. Pamphilus persisted that he had spoken truth. 'Where is this country of yours?' 'It belongs to those alone who worship the true God.' The judge, at once incensed and perplexed, after various torments, ordered him to be beheaded. Twelve martyrs suffered with him. One of them, Porphyrius, a servant of Pamphilus, begging the favour of interment for the deceased, was ordered to be burned; and was heard for the last time, when the flame began to reach him, calling upon Jesus the Son of God as his helper. It is remarkable, that Firmilian also himself, after having trodden in the steps of Urbanus in shedding Christian blood, like him also suffered capitally by the sentence of the emperor.

Toward the end of the seventh year, the persecution relaxing in some degree, the multitude of the confessors in the mines of Palestine enjoyed some liberty, and even erected some places of public worship. The president of the province coming among them, envied them this small cessation of their miseries, and wrote to the emperor in their prejudice. Afterwards the master of the mines coming thither, as if by an imperial rescript, divided the sufferers into classes. Some he ordered to dwell in Cyprus, others in Libanus; the rest he dispersed and harassed with various drudgeries in different parts of Pales-

tine. Four he singled out for the examination of the military commander, who burnt them to death. Silvanus, a bishop of great piety, John, an Egyptian, and thirty-seven others, were the same day beheaded by the order of Maximin. Of John it is remarked, that though blind, he had been, like the rest, cauterized and debilitated in one leg by a hot iron. The strength of his memory was admired among the Christians; he could with pleasure repeat from the Old or New Testament many passages in the Christian assemblies. But the fact proves something more than what Eusebius mentions, namely, that he had made the best use of his eyes while he was possessed of them.

And here we close the account from Eusebius, of the martyrs of Palestine. For eight years the east, with little intermission, groaned under the most heavy persecution. In the west their sufferings abated after two years. The political changes of the empire account for the difference. But, both in the east and in the west, Satan was permitted to exert his malice in the keenest manner during this last of the Pagan persecutions. And the divine power and wisdom, in still preserving a real church on earth, was never more conspicuously displayed since the days of the apostles. The time of an external triumph of the church, under Constantine, was at hand. Those who look at outward things alone, may be tempted to think how much more glorious would the church have appeared at that time, without the previous desolations of Dioclesian's persecution. But when it is considered how much Christian doctrine had decayed, and how low holy practice had fallen, the necessity of so sharp a trial, to purify the church and fit her at all for a state of prosperity is evident. Otherwise the difference between Christians and Pagans might probably have been little more than a name.

know it is common for authors to represent the

great declension of Christianity to have taken place only after its external establishment under Constantine. But the evidence of history has compelled me to dissent from this view of things. In fact we have seen, that for a whole generation previous to the persecution, few marks of superior piety appeared. Scarce a luminary of godliness existed; and it is not common in any age for a great work of the Spirit of God to be exhibited, but under the conduct of some remarkable saints, pastors, and reformers. This whole period, as well as the whole scene of the persecution, is very barren of such characters. Not but that many precious children of God suffered in much patience and charity. But those who suffered with very much of a different spirit found no pastor to discountenance their self-will and false zeal; a sure sign that the true spirit of martyrdom was less pure than it had formerly been. Moreover, the prevalence of superstition on the one hand, and the decay of evangelical knowledge on the other, are equally apparent. Christ crucified, justification purely by faith, and the effectual influences of the Holy Ghost, together with humbling views of man's total apostacy and corruption, these were ideas at least very faintly impressed at that day on Christian minds. It is vain to expect Christian faith to abound without Christian doctrine. Moral and philosophical and monastical instructions, will not effect for men what is to be expected from evangelical doctrine. And if the faith of Christ had so much declined, (and its decayed state ought to be dated from about the year 270.) the reader will be prepared to conceive aright of the state of the church, when Constantine took it under his protection, and to judge how far a national establishment was beneficial or prejudicial to it in future. Of this he could scarcely judge with any propriety, unless well informed of its previous spiritual condition.

. The emperor Constantius, lying at the point

of death, desired his partner in the east, Galerius, to send him home his son Constantine. The eastern emperor, having delayed as long as possible, sent him at last; and the son arrived in Britain just in time to see his father alive, who was interred at Eboracum, (York.) Constantine succeeding, gave the most perfect toleration to Christians, through the whole extent of his dominions. Providence was still with him in enlarging his kingdom, that, like another Cyrus, he might give peace and liberty to the church. Rome and Italy were for some time under the power of Maxentius, the son of Dioclesian's colleague Maximian. This prince attempted the chastity of a Roman matron, who by suicide prevented his base designs. Had she been a pagan, like Lucretia, her impatience under the hand of God were not to be wondered at; but she professed Christianity; yet her action is highly praised by Eusebius; a fresh proof of the taste of the times in religion. But Maxentius, though a tyrant of the basest character, never seems to have been, strictly speaking, a persecutor of the Christians. Constantine, however, at length coming from France into Italy, subverted his kingdom, and became sole master of the western world. It was in his expedition against Maxentius that he is said to have seen the miracle of the cross, the consideration of which will more properly excite our attention, when we come to consider the religious character and proceedings of this emperor. Maximian also, whose daughter Constantine had married, after various attempts to recover the power which by the influence of Dioclesian he had resigned, was put to death by his son-in-law for attempting his destruction.

Galerius himself, in the year 310 was smitten with an incurable disease: all his lower parts were corrupted, physicians and idols were applied to in vain, an intolerable stench spread itself over the palace of Sardis where he resided. He was devoured by worms, and in a situation the most dreadful he continued a

whole year. Softened at length by his sufferings, he published, in the year 311, an edict, by which he took off the persecution from the Christians, allowed them to rebuild their places of worship, and intreated them to pray for his health. Thus did God himself subdue this haughty tyrant. Prisons were opened, and among others Donatus, the friend of Lactantius, who had been confined six years, recovered his liberty.

But Maximin, equally unmoved by the example of Constantine on the one hand, and the extorted clemency of Galerius on the other, suppressed the edict of the latter, and contented himself with giving verbal orders to stop the persecution. The prætorian prefect Sabinus, however, declared the will of the emperor in favour of toleration, which had all the effect his humanity wished. The prisoners were released, the confessors were freed from the mines, the highways were full of Christians, singing psalms and hymns to God, as they returned to their friends, and Christendom at length wore a cheerful aspect. Even pagans were melted, and many who had joined in the attempt to extinguish the Christian name, began to be convinced that a religion which had sustained such repeated and such formidable attacks must be divine and invincible.

But this calm lasted not six whole months. Galerius, a few days after his edict, expired, his body being altogether corrupted. Maximin attempted to succeed him in all his eastern dominions; but was prevented by Licinius, whom Galerius had nominated Augustus, and who took possession of Asia Minor. But Syria and Egypt, with their dependencies, remained still under Maximin. Here he renewed the persecution with much malevolence and artifice. Under certain pretences, he forbade Christians to assemble in their churchyards, and then he privately procured petitions from various cities, which desired that the Christians might not be encouraged in their

precincts. This was a refined species of policy, which he was assisted by Theotecnus, the governor of Antioch. This man had hunted the Christians from their places of confinement, and had caused the deaths of many. He now set up an oracle of Jupiter and consecrated the idol at Antioch, with new ceremonies. Jupiter gave out, that the Christians were to be banished from the city, and Maximian was informed, that it was his duty, both from motives of religion and of policy, to persecute the Christians. The other magistrates of the cities, subject to Maximian, acted the same part as Theotecnus, and persons were sent by the Pagan inhabitants begging the expulsion of Christians.

Certain fictitious acts of Pilate and our Lord, full of blasphemy, were, by Maximian's approval, circulated through his dominions, with orders to facilitate the publication of them in all places, to direct schoolmasters to deliver them to the children, that they might commit them to memory. An officer at Damascus also engaged some infidel women to confess, that they had been Christians, were privy to the lascivious practices which were committed on the Lord's day in their assemblies, and other slanders were registered, copied, and sent to the emperor, as the authenticated confessions of these women, and he circulated them through his dominions. The officer who invented this calumny destroyed himself sometime after by his own hand. But a specious pretence was now given for sustaining the persecution. Maximian, affecting the praise of clemency, gave orders to the prefects to take away the lives of Christians, but to spare them with loss of eyes and various amputations. There appears a plan of polite refinement in this renewed persecution, beyond any thing which had yet been practised. Maximian did not now, as he had done formerly under Galerius, slay indiscriminately, or put to death numbers with out

tortures. A few bishops and persons of Christian renown were deprived of life, the rest were harassed by every other kind of suffering short of death, and no arts were left unemployed to root Christianity out of the mind, and educate the next generation in a confirmed aversion to it. The decrees of cities against Christians, and besides these, the copies of imperial edicts engraved in brazen tables, were nailed up and seen in every town. Nothing like this had been done before. The persecution in this, its last stage, had arrived at the perfection of diabolical ingenuity. Children in their schools daily sounded Jesus and Pilate, and other things invented to asperse the gospel.

A rescript of the emperor's, nailed to a post at Tyre, manifests with what pleasure and joy he had received the petition of that city against the Christians. It venerates Jupiter and the rest of the gods, as the authors of all good, appeals to the experience of the inhabitants how happily their affairs had proceeded since the worship of the ancients had been restored, how they were now blest with good harvests, had no plagues, earthquakes, or tempests, and enjoyed peace through the empire, and how opposite to all this the case had been, while Christianity prevailed. He desires that such as persisted still in their error should be banished from Tyre, according to the prayer of the petition. This rescript was a specimen of the rest, and it cannot be denied, that either Maximin, or some persons about him, were men of capacity, industry, and activity, though surely a worse cause was never found for the exertion of these talents.

Never were Christian minds so clouded and dispirited. Thus low did God suffer his church to fall, to try its faith, and to purify it in the furnace. Art was more poisonous than rage, and the deceptions seemed calculated to impose (if it were possible) even on the very elect. Very remarkable, however, was

the Divine testimony to his church; at this man's extremity was the opportunity in which truth and goodness of God appeared most conspicuous. There were doubtless many true Christians at that time wrestling with their God, to appear before his church, and he did so, in this manner. When the messengers were on the road with robes similar to that of Tyre, a drought commenced, and unexpectedly oppressed the dominions of Maximian; then followed a plague with inflamed ulcers, sores spread over the body, but chiefly affecting eyes and blinded many. And the Armenians, allies and neighbours of the Eastern empire, entered into a war with Maximian; they were disposed to favour the gospel, and Maximian, by extending persecution to them, drew on their hostility. When the boasts of Maximian were confounded, plague and famine raged in the most dreadful manner, and multitudes lay unburied. The Christians, whose piety and fear of God were strengthened on this occasion, were the only persons who employed themselves in doing good, every day they employed themselves in taking care of the sick, and burying the dead, whereas numbers of pagans were neglected by their own friends; they gathered together multitudes of the famished poor, and distributed bread to all; thus imitating their heavenly Father who sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Christians still appeared to be superior to all others, and the church was known still to exist, by her peculiarly her own, to the praise of her God and Saviour.

In the year 313, there was a war between Licinius and Maximian, who contended each for the sovereignty of the east. Before the decisive battle Maximian vowed to Jupiter, that if he obtained the victory, he would abolish the Christian religion. Licinius, in a dream, was directed to sacrifice to God, in order to obtain the victory, and he did so, and was victorious.

manner. He gave directions to his soldiers to do so and they prayed in the field of battle, using the very words which he had received in his dream. In all this the reader will see nothing suspicious, nothing but what is, in its own nature, very credible, when he considers that the contest between Jehovah and Jupiter was now at its height, and drawing to a crisis. Victory decided in favour of Licinius. Maximin, in consequence of this, published a cautious decree, in which he forbade the molestation of Christians, but did not allow them the liberty of public worship. Warned by former experience of his enmity, the Christians in his dominions dared not to assemble themselves together. Whilst the rest of the Christian world, under the auspices of Constantine and Licinius, who published a complete toleration of Christianity, together with that of all other religions, enjoyed peace and tranquillity.

It was the will of God to lay his hand still more heavily on the tyrant. Struck with rage at his disappointments, in the sad reverse of his affairs he slew many priests and prophets of his gods, by whose enchantments he had been seduced with false hopes of universal empire in the east; and finding, most probably, that he gained no friends among Christians by his late edict, he published another in their favour, as full and complete as that of Constantine and Licinius. So amazingly were affairs now changed, that contending emperors courted the favour of the poor persecuted Christians. After this, he was struck with a sudden plague over his whole body, pined away with hunger, fell down from his bed, his flesh being so wasted away by a secret fire, that it consumed and dropped off from his bones; his eyes started out of their sockets; and, in his distress, he began to see God passing judgment on him. Frantic in his agonies, he cried out, 'It was not I, but others who did it.' At length, by the increasing force of torment, he owned his guilt, and

every now and then implored Christ, that he would compassionate his misery. He confessed himself vanquished, and gave up the ghost.

Thus closed the most memorable of all the attacks of Satan on the Christian church. Since that time he has never been able to persecute Christians, as such, within the limits of Roman civilization in Europe. I thought the account of the most violent attempt to eradicate the gospel, ever known, deserved to be distinctly related. If some things happened more approaching to the nature of miracles than ordinary history knows, the greatness of the contest shows at once the propriety of such signal divine interpositions, and renders them more credible. The present age affects a scepticism more daring than any preceding one; but in every age before this, all pious and considerate persons have agreed that the arm of God was lifted up in a wonderful manner, at once to chastise and to purify his church, and also to demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion to the proudest and the fiercest of his enemies, till they were obliged to confess that the gospel was divine, and must stand in the earth invincible; that the Most High ruleth, and that he will have a church in the world, which will glorify him, in spite of earth and hell united, and that this church contains in it all that deserves the name of true wisdom and true virtue.

II.—A VIEW OF THE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION ON ITS ESTABLISHMENT UNDER CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE had shown, from early life, some predilections in favour of Christianity. His father Constantius, like Agrippa, had been almost persuaded to be a Christian, and probably the same fear of man, and the same love of the world, operated as a check upon both. This, however, we are informed concerning him, that he condemned the polytheism of

the times, and worshipped one God, the maker of all things, that he had multitudes of Christians in his palace, and among these, ministers of the gospel, who openly prayed for the emperor. The knowledge of these things, joined to the remarkable contrast between the moral character of his father, and that of the other emperors, must have made some impression in favour of the Christian religion on the intelligent spirit of Constantine, though more pungent views of internal depravity and guilt be needful to induce the mind to enter fully into the spirit of the gospel. But even a worldly mind may feel the need of divine assistance, when dubious under the prospect of important secular events: and Constantine marching from France into Italy against Maxentius, on an expedition which was likely either to exalt or to ruin him, was oppressed with anxiety. Some god he thought needful to protect him. The God of the Christians he was most inclined to respect; but he wanted some satisfactory proof of his real existence and power; and he neither understood the means of acquiring this, nor could he be content with the atheistic indifference in which so many generals and heroes since his time have acquiesced. He prayed, he implored, with much vehemence and importunity; and God left him not unanswered. While he was marching with his forces, in the afternoon, the trophy of the cross appeared very luminous in the heavens, higher than the sun, with this inscription, ‘Conquer by this.’ He and his soldiers were astonished at the sight. But he continued pondering on the event till night. And Christ appeared to him when asleep, with the same sign of the cross, and directed him to make use of the symbol as his military ensign. Constantine obeyed, and the cross was henceforward displayed in his armies.

Constantine, who hitherto was totally unacquainted with Christian doctrine, asked the pastors, who this

God was, or what was the meaning of the sign. They told him, that it was God, the only-begotten Son of the only true God, that the sign was the trophy of the victory, which he, when on earth, had gained over Death. At the same time, they explained to him the causes of his coming, and the doctrine of his incarnation. From that time Constantine firmly believed the truth of Christianity. He would have acted irrationally if he had not; and it were an inexcusable want of candour to ascribe to motives merely political, a course of conduct in favour of Christianity, in which he persevered to his death; and which he began at a time when the triumph of the Christian cause, and the success of his arms, as connected with it, were extremely dubious. He began after this to read the scriptures, and zealously patronized the pastors of the church all his days. Whether he really loved the gospel, and felt its influence on his own heart, is a doubtful question; but that he believed it to be divinely true, is certain, if a consistent and long course of actions be admitted as evidence.

It belongs to civil history to describe the civil and military transactions of this warlike and magnanimous prince. He was no sooner made master of Rome by the destruction of Maxentius, than he honoured the cross by putting a spear of that form into the hand of the statue erected for him at Rome. He now built churches, and showed great beneficence to the poor. He encouraged the meeting of bishops in synods, he honoured them with his presence, and employed himself in continually aggrandizing the church. In the meantime his associate in the East, Licinius, began to persecute it.

Notwithstanding the proofs which this man had had of the divine interposition in favour of the Gospel, during his contest with Maximin, the force of old prejudices imbibed under Galerius operated at length, in conjunction with the native depravity of

the human heart, to induce him to renew the persecution. He prohibited Christian synods in his dominions, expelled believers from his court, and forbade the women to attend the public assemblies of men, and ordered them to furnish themselves with separate teachers of their own sex. He dismissed from his armies those who refused to sacrifice, and forbade any supplies to be afforded them in their necessities. He proceeded still further. He murdered bishops and destroyed churches. At Amasia, in Pontus, his cruelty was particularly distinguished. He used enchantments, and once more Satan made a feeble attempt to recover by his means the ground he had lost. It was not probable that Licinius should take these steps without quarrelling with Constantine, and a war soon commenced between the two princes. Licinius put the truth or falsehood of the Gospel on the event of war. It was an unwarranted appeal, but God answered him in his own way. He lost in the issue both his empire and his life. It is remarkable, that one of Constantine's soldiers, who parted with the banner of the cross in battle to save his life, lost it, while he, who in his room supported and upheld the banner, was preserved. It were to be wished, that there had been as much zeal at this time to support the doctrines and realize the power of the cross, as there was to honour its formalities. But this was far from being the case.

If we look at the external appearance of Christianity, nothing can be more splendid. An emperor, full of zeal for the propagation of the only divine religion, by edicts restores to the church every thing of which it had been deprived, indemnifies those who had suffered, honors the pastors exceedingly, recommends to governors of provinces to promote the gospel; and though he will neither oblige them nor any others to profess it, yet he forbids them to make use of the sacrifices commonly made by prefects; he erects churches exceedingly sumptuous and orna-

mental, with distinctions of the parts corresponding in some measure to those in Solomon's temple. He discovers with much zeal the sepulchre of Christ in Jerusalem, real or pretended, and honours it with the most expensive sacred edifice. His mother fills the whole Roman world with her munificence in support of religion; and after erecting churches and travelling from place to place to excite zeal, dies before her son, aged eighty years, leaving the Christian cause neglected even out of the memory of the Roman empire. Constantine zealous in a letter to Sapor, king of Persia, for the conversion of his dominions: he destroys idol temples, abolishes impious pagan rites, puts an end to the savage games of gladiators, stands up with respectful attention to hear the sermon of Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, a historian; furnishes him with the volumes of the Scriptures for the use of the churches, orders the observation of the festivals of martyrs, and the reading of the Scriptures at his court, and in the churches with great solemnity, makes Christianity himself, one of which of a considerable number is preserved by the historian his favourite. He directs the sacred observation of the Lord's day, which he adds that of Friday also, the day of the crucifixion, and teaches the soldiers of his army to pray by a short form made for their use.

It may seem invidious to throw any shadow of suspicion on the picture, but though the abolition of lewd, and inhuman customs must have been of great advantage to society, and though the benefits of Christianity, compared with paganism, to the weak appear very strong by these means; yet all is but sound principle be wanting, is but form and shadow. As it was difficult to clear Origen of deprecating the divinity of Christ, so it is still more difficult to impeach Eusebius, with whom he was a favorite. Not to anticipate what will more properly pass under examination hereafter, there seems to have

in Eusebius and some of his friends, and probably in the emperor himself, a disposition, of which, perhaps they were not conscious, to lessen the honours of the Son of God. In his oration at the dedication of the church at Tyre, he distinguishes between the first and the second cause, and seems very careful to give the supreme title exclusively to the Father. His sermons breathe little of Christianity, so far as I have seen them. He largely assigns various causes for the coming of Christ into the world, and though among these he gives some place to the work of redemption and sacrifice for sin, he speaks of them slightly, and as it were by the bye. I have observed also, that, in one place of his writings, he speaks in a very subordinate manner of the Holy Ghost, though it must be confessed, he is so rhetorical, and indistinct in his theological discourses, that it is difficult to extract any determinate propositions from his writings.

It was to be expected that great defectiveness of doctrine would not fail to influence practice. External piety flourished, monastic societies in particular places were also growing; but faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, appear very rare; yet, among the poor and obscure Christians, I hope there was far more godliness than could be seen at courts, and among bishops and persons of eminence. The doctrine of real conversion was very much lost, or external baptism was placed in its stead; and the true doctrine of justification by faith, and the true practical use of a crucified Saviour for troubled consciences, were scarcely to be seen at this time. There was much outward religion, but this could not make men saints in heart and life. The worst part of the character of Constantine is, that as he grew older, he grew more culpable, oppressive in his own family, oppressive to the government, oppressive by eastern superfluous magnificence; and the facts to be displayed will show, how little true humility and charity were now known in the Christian world, while

superstition and self-righteousness were making vigorous shoots, and the real gospel of Christ was hidden from men who professed it.

The schism of the Donatists, as its history throws some light on the manners of Christians, will deserve a few words in this place. During the cessation of the persecution in the West, while it raged still in the East, on the death of Mensurius bishop of Carthage, a council of neighbouring bishops was called for the appointment of his successor. The council was thinner than had been usual, through the management of Botrus and Celesius, two persons who aspired to the office, whose ambition was however disappointed, the election falling on Cæcilian the deacon. All that was essential in the appointment of a bishop was observed in this transaction; for Cæcilian had confessedly the suffrage of the whole church. The two disappointed persons protested against the election, and were joined by Lucilla, a rich lady, who for a long time had been too haughty to submit to discipline. One Donatus, of Casæ nigrae, who had been a schismatic before this time, offered himself as the chief of the faction. A number of bishops co-operated with him, piqued that they had not been called to the ordination of Cæcilian. Seventy bishops met thus together at Carthage, to depose Cæcilian.

The reader will conceive in a strong light, how corrupt the pastors of the African church must have been at that time, when such a number met to impose a bishop on the church of Carthage against the general sense of the Christians at that place, and were at the same time unable to object any one crime, or support the least material accusation against the pastor, who had the hearts of the people. Yet they persevered, and ordained one Majorinus, a servant of the factious lady, who, to support the ordination, gave large sums of money, which the bishops divided among themselves.

Such is the origin of the famous Donatist schism, the second class of dissenters who have appeared in the records of the church: but, as in their origin, so in their manners and spirit all along, they seem unworthy to be compared with the first class, the Novatian, which still existed. With these a degree of real spirituality existed, whereas with the Donatist, there does not appear to have been any.

It would be tedious to enter into a detail of Constantine's proceedings in regard to this sect. Undoubtedly he had a great respect for whatever he conceived to be Christian. With much candour and patience he examined and re-examined the case of the Donatists; and the issue was constantly to their disgrace. They stirred up magistrates to deprive the Christian pastors of the benefit of the imperial laws, by which they were exempted from public offices, and endeavoured to deprive them of their churches, till the emperor was at last provoked to confiscate the places of their assemblies. Silvanus, one of the Donatist bishops, being convicted of having delivered up the vessels of the church, and of being simoniacally ordained a bishop, and of having deprived the Christians of their church, was sent into banishment with some others of the faction. Yet such was the kindness of Constantine toward the Christian name, that he recalled them from their banishment, and granted religious toleration to the party, of which lenity they continued to make an unworthy use.

How corrupt is human nature! The church has outward peace and even prosperity. Yet feuds, contentions, and the most unworthy spirit of avarice and ambition appear very prevalent. So ungrateful were men for that admirable administration of Providence, which as we have seen now took place in their favour. Another scourge seemed quickly necessary, a scourge generated from their own vices indeed, though evidently of divine appointment, for the chastisement of the church. Satan saw his time; pure

doctrinal truth was now too commonly mere speculation. Men were ripe for a perversion of doctrine. Lower or ambiguous views of Christ were secretly rising amidst the Platonic studies of learned men. Origen gave the first handle; Eusebius the historian with cautious prudence was fomenting the evil. And at length a bold and open assault was made against the deity of the Son of God, and persecution was stirred up against Christians by those who bore the Christian name. The people of God were exercised, refined, and improved; while the Christian world at large was torn in pieces with violence, intrigue, and scandalous animosities, to the grief of all who loved the Son of God, and walked in his ways in godly simplicity.

III.—THE PROGRESS OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY, TILL THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

PETER, bishop of Alexandria, had suffered martyrdom under the Dioclesian persecution. Numbers had recanted at that time to save their lives, and among the rest Meletius, an Egyptian bishop. This man was of a schismatical and enterprising spirit, and having been deposed by Peter before his martyrdom, he separated himself, continued bishop on his own plan, ordained others, and gave rise to the third species of Dissenters. THAT is the proper name of the Meletian party, for they are not charged with corruption in their doctrine. Nor was this the only person who disturbed the church, and exercised the patience of Peter. Arius of Alexandria, in his beginnings was a promising character, but on the appearance of the Meletian party, he espoused their cause. Sometime after he left it and reconciled himself to Peter, and was by him ordained deacon: but condemning the bishop's severity in rejecting the Meletian baptism, and exhibiting a restless and factious spirit, he was again expelled from the

church. After which Peter was called to his rest by martyrdom. He was, like Cyprian, too severe in rejecting the baptism of schismatics and heretics, but his zeal was doubtless from a desire of preserving the uniformity of Christian faith, and he did not live to see still stronger proofs of that turbulent and contentious spirit in his deacon, which has rendered the name of Arius so famous in history.

Achillas had succeeded to the bishopric: and from him Arius by submissions again obtained favour. Understanding and capacity will command respect, and these were undoubtedly possessed by Arius in a great degree. He was by nature formed to deceive. In his behaviour and manner of life he was severe and grave, in his person tall and venerable, and in his dress almost monastic. He was agreeable and captivating in conversation, and well skilled in logic and all the improvements of the human mind, then fashionable in the world.

Such was the famous Arius, who gave name to one of the most powerful heresies which ever afflicted the Church of Christ, and of whom Cicero's words, with little variation, in his masterly character of Cataline, might be delivered: 'had he not possessed some apparent virtues, he would not have been able to form so great a design, nor to have proved so formidable an adversary.' He who does much mischief in deceiving souls, must at least have a fair appearance of morals. Paul of Samosata wanted this, and he glittered only as the insect of a day.

Achillas advanced Arius to the office of presbyter, which, in that church, was more important than in others, because each presbyter had a distinct congregation of his own, and was not sent up and down to different churches, at the discretion of the bishop, as the general practice had been in the primitive church. This practice, however, in time gave way to the *Alexandrian* custom. Alexander, the successor of Achillas, under Constantine, treated Arius

with respect, and appeared very backward to censure him for his dangerous speculations in religion. The pride of reasoning seduced the presbyter to assert, that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he was capable of virtue or of vice, and that he was a creature, and mutable as creatures are. Whilst he was insinuating these things, the easiness of Alexander in tolerating such notions was found fault with in the church. Necessity roused him at length, however unwilling, to contend, and in disputing before Arius and the rest of his clergy, he affirmed that there was an union in the Trinity. Arius thinking that the bishop introduced Sabellianism, eagerly maintained the extreme which is opposite to that heresy, and said, 'if the Father begat the Son, the begotten had a beginning of existence; hence it was evident there was a time when he was not.'

I have given the narration from the two historians, rather with a view to connect and reconcile them, than from a conviction that this dispute arose from Alexander's zeal to withstand the growth of Arianism. For it might have originated from his orthodox zeal in general, before Arius had yet distinctly broached his notions. Be that as it may, Arianism evidently split on the common rock of all heresies, a desire of explaining by our reason the modes of things which we are required to believe on divine testimony alone. Many of the clergy joined the disputatious presbyter, and it was no longer in Alexander's power to prevent a solemn cognizance of the cause. He was himself cautious and slow in his proceedings; while many persons of a grave cast and able and eloquent, like Arius, espoused and fostered the infant heresy. Arius preached diligently at his church, diffused his opinions in all companies, and gained over many of the common people, a number of women who had professed virginity, espoused his cause; and Alexander saw the sacred doctrine of the church undermined continually.

venient measures and argumentative methods having been tried in vain, he summoned a synod of bishops, who met at Alexandria, condemned Arius's doctrine, and expelled him from the church, with nine of his adherents.

What Arius really held may be distinctly stated from the concurrent testimony of friends and enemies. Already some secret and ambiguous attempts had been made to lessen the idea of the divinity of the Son of God. While his eternity was admitted by Eusebius the historian, he yet was not willing to own him co-equal with the Father. Arius went greater lengths; he said, That the Son proceeded out of a state of non-existence; that he was not before he was made; that he, who is without beginning, has set his Son as the beginning of things that are made, and that God made one, whom he called Word, Son, and Wisdom, by whom he did create us. From these, and such like expressions, it is evident what Arianism properly is; for the epistle of Arius himself, preserved by Theodoret, represents his views in the same manner as his adversaries have done, and proves that no injustice was done to him in this respect.

It is an easy thing to say here, that silence and charity would have been the best means of preserving peace on all sides; but then this mode of speaking supposes that the controversy was frivolous. No real Christian can think it unimportant, whether his Saviour be believed to be the Creator or a creature: The soul is of too great consequence for men to hazard its salvation on they know not what. And it then appeared to all humble and charitable Christians, that to persist in blaspheming God, was at least as practical an evil as to persist in drunkenness and theft. All these found themselves obliged to join with Alexander against Arius. Silence was a vice in this case; though it can never be enough lamented how little care was taken of humility and charity, of both which the exercise is perfectly con-

sistent with the sincere zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity; but true religion itself was low; the face of the church was "sullied and dishonoured, yet still divine." And amidst the numbers who, from fashion, prejudice, or worse motives, joined with the Alexandrian bishop, we must look for those, though they are hard to be found, who feared God, and whose history alone is the subject before us. The principles of Arius exclude him and his followers, and by the fullest light of antiquity their actions also exclude them, from being numbered among the sound, faithful, intelligent followers of Jesus.

The Christian world now became the scene of animosity and contention. The orthodox and the heretical did each their utmost to support their pretensions: practical religion was too much forgotten by both sides; and the former, from the want, or at least from the very low state of experimental religion, were deprived of the very best method of supporting the truth, by showing its necessary connection with the foundation of true piety and virtue. The Gentiles beheld the contest and triumphed; and on their theatres they ridiculed the contentions of Christians, to which their long and grievous provocations of their God had justly exposed them. Alexander repeatedly, in letters and appeals, maintained his cause, and so far as speculative argumentation can do it, he proved his point from the scriptures; while Arius strengthened himself by forming alliances with various bishops, and particularly with Eusebius of Nicomedia, who supported Arianism with all his might. He had been translated from Berytus in Syria, and by living in the metropolis (for there Constantine resided much,) he had an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the emperor. Near an hundred bishops, in a second synod at Alexandria, condemned Arius, who was now obliged to quit that place, and try to gain supporters in other parts of the empire.

In the year 324, Constantine being at Nicomedia, and intending to make a farther progress into the East, was prevented by the news of these contentions. He wrote both to Alexander and Arius, blamed both, expressed his desire for their agreement, and explained nothing. He sent the letter by Hosius bishop of Corduba, one whose faith and piety had been distinguished in the late persecutions. Hosius endeavoured to make up the breach; but it was impossible. Constantine therefore took the resolution of summoning the aid of the whole Christian church; and the Nicene Council calls for our attention.

The bishops, collected from all parts of the Christian world, met at Nice in Bithynia: and their number, according to the account of Athanasius, who was present, amounted to three hundred and eighteen. Of these, if we may believe Philostorgius the Arian historian, twenty-two espoused the cause of Arius; others make the minority still less. Be that as it may, since many presbyters were there besides the bishops, it is not probable that the whole number of persons assembled in the council was less than six hundred.

They met in the year 325, being transported to Nice in public conveyances at the emperor's expence, and maintained at his cost, while they resided there. Constantine himself came to the synod, and exhorted them to peace and unanimity. A number of mutual accusations having been presented to him, he threw them all into the fire, protesting that he had not read one of them, and charged them to forbear, and forgive one another. After this very candid and generous procedure, he gave them leave to enter directly on the business of the synod. They canvassed the doctrine of Arius, extracted his propositions out of his own writings, and argued the subject with great vehemence; Constantine himself acting as *moderator*, and endeavouring to bring them

to perfect agreement. But it soon appeared, that without some explanatory terms, decisively pointing out what the scriptures had revealed, it was impossible to guard against the subtilties of the Arians. Did the Trinitarians assert that Christ was God? the Arians allowed it, but in the same sense as holy men and angels are styled gods in scripture. Did they affirm that he was truly God? the others allowed that he was made so by God. Did they affirm that the Son was naturally of God? it was granted; for even we, said they, are of God, of whom are all things. Was it affirmed, that the Son was the power, wisdom, and image of the Father? we admit it, replied the others, for we also are said to be the image and glory of God. Such is the account which Athanasius gives of the disputations. He was, at that time, deacon of the church of Alexandria, and supported his bishop with so much accuracy and strength of argument, as to lay the foundation of that fame, which he afterwards acquired by his zeal in this controversy. What could the Trinitarians do in this situation? To leave the matter undecided, was to do nothing; to confine themselves merely to scripture terms, was to suffer the Arians to explain the doctrine in their own way, and to reply nothing. Undoubtedly they had a right to comment according to their own judgment, as well as the Arians, and they did so in the following manner: They collected together the passages of scripture, which represent the divinity of the Son of God, and observed that, taken together, they amounted to a proof of his being of the same substance with the Father, *ομοουσιος*. That creatures were, indeed, said to be of God, because, not existing of themselves, they had their beginning from him; but that the Son was peculiarly of the Father, being of his substance, as begotten of him.

It behoves every one who is desirous of knowing simply the mind of God from his own word to deter-

mine for himself, how far their interpretation of scripture was true. The council however was, by the majority before stated, convinced, that this was a fair explanation, and that the Arian use of the terms God, true God, and the like, was a mere deception, because they affixed to them ideas which the scriptures would by no means admit. So the most pious Christians have thought in all ages since. But to censure the council for introducing a new term, when all that was meant by it was to express their interpretation of the scriptures, appears unreasonable to the last degree, however fashionable. To say, that they ought to have confined themselves to the very words of Scripture, when the Arians had first introduced their own gloss, seems much the same, as to say that the Trinitarians had not the same right with the Arians to express their own interpretation of Scripture, and in their own language.

The great patron of the Arians was Eusebius of Nicomedia, who wrote a letter to the council, in which he found fault with the idea of the Son of God being uncreated. The whole Arian party presented also their confession of faith. Both that and the letter of Eusebius were condemned as heretical. The venerable Hosius of Corduba was appointed to draw up a creed, which is in the main the same that is called the Nicene creed to this day. It soon received the sanction of the council, and of Constantine himself, who declared, that whoever refused to comply with the decree should be banished. Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian, expressed for some time his doubts concerning the term consubstantial. He observed, in a letter which he wrote on this occasion to his church, that all the mischief had arisen from the use of unscriptural terms, and that he at last subscribed to the term for the sake of peace. It would undoubtedly be unjust to accuse this great man of Arianism. Yet why was he so much disposed to favour Arius by writing to Alexander, as if he had

been wronged? why so disposed to join afterwards, as we shall see, against Athanasius? The truth is, he seems to have held a middle notion, that the Son of God was from eternity, but was not Jehovah; the very same notion, if I mistake not, which was revived by the famous Dr. Clark, explained in his scripture doctrine of the Trinity, and I think very solidly confuted by Dr. Waterland in his reply.

From the opinion of Eusebius thus ascertained, one may form an idea of Constantine's creed, if indeed he had any distinct one in his mind. Undoubtedly Eusebius was his great favourite, and moulded his imperial disciple as he pleased. But let his opinions have been what they may, he seems not to have been very zealous for any thing, except peace and uniformity. Never was a council more free from political impediments. The bishops undoubtedly spake their sentiments without reserve in general; and Constantine was disposed to give his sanction to any creed to which the majority should agree. We have here then the testimony of nearly the whole Christian world in favour of the doctrine of the proper deity of the Son of God, a testimony free, unbiassed, and unrestrained. How can this be accounted for but hence, that they followed the plain sense of scripture and of the church in preceding ages? As to the connexion between church and state, and the propriety of civil penalties in matters of religion, I may find a more proper place to dwell upon those subjects hereafter.

Arius was deposed, excommunicated, and forbidden to enter Alexandria. The minority at first refused to subscribe: but being advised to yield at length, by Constantia their patroness, the emperor's sister, they consented. But by the insertion of a single letter they reserved to themselves their own sense, subscribing, not that the Son is the same, but only of a like essence with the Father. Honesty is however always respectable. Out of twenty-two

Arian bishops, two were found who persisted in refusing ; Secundus, of Ptolemais, and Theonas of Marmarica : the former of whom bluntly rebuked the courtly Eusebius of Nicomedia for his dissimulation. Arius and his associates were banished into Illyricum.

The Meletian controversy was also settled. Meletius was permitted to live in his own city, with the title of bishop, but without authority. His sect was indulged in some degree, and continued a long time after in the church. The dispute concerning Easter was likewise finally adjusted in this council.

Three months after the dissolution of the synod, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Theognis of Nice, were banished, by the emperor's command, for attempting still to support the Arian cause.

Alexander, dying five months after his return home, had desired that Athanasius might be appointed his successor. Alexandria in general joined in the same request, which the modesty of Athanasius resisted a considerable time. His integrity and his abilities however pointed him out as a proper successor to the zealous Alexander. And he was at last ordained, with the strongest testimonies of general satisfaction. He was not then above twenty-eight years of age, and he held the see forty-six years, and during the whole of that time, with little intermission, was exposed to persecution on account of his zeal against Arianism ; and it must be owned, that constancy and firmness in a cause were never better tried than his were, through the whole course of this period.

After the death of Helena, Constantine showed particular kindness to Constantia his sister, who was much led by a presbyter secretly in the Arian interest. They persuaded her that Arius and his friends were unjustly condemned. She on her death-bed prevailed on Constantine by her intreaties to do justice to these men. The emperor, who seemed as much *a child in religious discernment* as he was a man in

political sagacity, suffered himself to be imposed on by the ambiguous craft of Arius and his friend Euzoius, so as to write in their favour to the churches. Eusebius also, and Theognis, by owning the Nicene faith in words, were restored to their sees. The former wrote to Athanasius, desiring him to receive Arius, now returned from banishment, to communion; but in vain. Athanasius had principle, and could not sport with subscriptions and bonds as his adversaries did. The Nicene creed had still all the sanction which church and state could give it. It was not at that time possible, by all the artifices of ingenious and unprincipled men, to persuade the Christian world, that the scripture held what it did not, or that their fathers had all along thought as Arius did. Even the chiefs of Arianism had been now restored, not as Arians, but as men well affected to the doctrine of the Trinity. And they attempted by subtilty and artifice to establish at length what was impossible to be done by fair argument. Determined to ruin Athanasius if possible, they united themselves closely with the Meletians, and infected them with their heresy. They procured the deposition of Euzathius of Antioch, an eloquent and learned professor, who was, on unjust pretences, banished from his see. This person, before his departure, exhorted his flock to be stedfast in the truth, and his words were of great weight with that flourishing church. He and several priests and deacons were banished. The good man bore the will of God with meekness and patience, and died in exile at Philippi.

The repeated attempts of the adversaries of Athanasius at length so far prevailed in prejudicing the mind of the emperor, that he ordered a synod to be convened at Tyre, not to examine the principles of the bishop, which even his adversaries had been obliged to admit, but to institute an inquiry, whether various crimes, with which he was charged, had been really committed. In the year 335, the synod met

under the direction of Eusebius of Cæsarea, and some other bishops; before whom the bishop of Alexandria, attended by certain Egyptian bishops, was obliged to appear.

The heaviest crimes were charged upon Athanasius, rebellion, oppression, rape and murder. But every thing appeared to be the result of malice. One case alone shall be mentioned, by which a judgment may be formed of all the rest. He was said to have murdered Arsenius, a Meletian bishop; for proof of which the accusers produced a box, out of which they took a dead man's hand, dried and salted, which they affirmed to be the hand of Arsenius, and that it was preserved by Athanasius for magical purposes. But Athanasius, forewarned of this attack, had been enabled to discover and produce Arsenius himself. Silence being made, Athanasius asked the judges, if any of them knew Arsenius? Several affirming that they did, Athanasius directs the man to be brought into the court, and asks, Is this the man whom I murdered, and whose hand I cut off? For you see,' said he, 'that Arsenius has both his hands; how the accusers came by the third hand, let them explain.' Thus ended the plot to the shame of the contrivers.

Yet, notwithstanding the clearest proofs of Athanasius's innocence, and that the whole course of his life was extremely opposite to such crimes as he was charged with, his enemies prevailed so far, that commissioners were dispatched into Egypt, to examine the matters of which he was accused. Yet John, the Meletian bishop, the chief contriver of the plot, confessed his fault to Athanasius, and begged his forgiveness. And Arsenius himself renounced his former connexions, and desired to be received into communion with the Alexandrian prelate.

Egypt, where Athanasius must have been best known, was faithful to her prelate. Forty-seven bishops of that country entered a protest against the

injustice of the council, but in vain. The Arian commissioners arrived at Alexandria, and endeavoured to extort evidence against him by drawn swords, whips, clubs, and all engines of cruelty. The Alexandrian clergy desired to be admitted to give evidence, but were refused. To the number of fifteen presbyters and four deacons they remonstrated, but to no purpose. The Maraëotic clergy took the same steps, but to no purpose. The delegates returned with extorted evidence to Tyre, whence Athanasius, who saw no justice was to be had, had fled. They passed sentence, and deposed him from his bishopric.

Yet there were those in the synod of Tyre, who were willing to do justice to the much-injured prelate. Paphnutius, who has been before-mentioned, took Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem, by the hand: 'Let us be gone,' said he, 'it becomes not those who have lost their limbs for religion, to go along with such pernicious company.' But the majority were very differently disposed.

Athanasius came to Constantinople, and desired justice from the emperor, and a fair trial. Constantine ordered the bishops of the synod to appear before him, and to give an account of what they had done. The greatest part of them returned home; but the genius of Eusebius of Nicomedia was not exhausted, and as he stuck at no fraud, and was ashamed of no villainy, he, with a few of the synod, went to Constantinople, and waving the old accusations, he brought a fresh one, namely, that Athanasius had threatened to stop the fleet that brought corn from Alexandria to Constantinople. Constantine was credulous enough to be moved by the report: the Arian arts prevailed at court: those who used no arms but truth and honesty were foiled for the present; and Athanasius was banished to Treves in Gaul.

Arius, flushed with the success of his party, returned to Alexandria, and strengthened the hands of the heretics, who had long languished for want

his abilities. The city being torn with intestine divisions, the emperor ordered the heresiarch to come to Constantinople, and there to give an account of his conduct. That imperial city was now the chief seat of the contention. But Providence had given her a bishop not unequal to the contest. This was Alexander of Constantinople, a man of eminent piety and integrity, whose character at least seems to have approached as near to that of a primitive Christian as did that of any persons who distinguished themselves at this period. Eusebius of Nicomedia menaced him with deposition and exile, unless he consented to receive Arius into the church. On the one hand, the prelate knew too well the power of the Arians by what they had done already; and the Trinitarians were so far outmatched by them in subtilty and artifice, that though victorious in argument in the face of the whole world, with the council of Nice and an orthodox emperor on their side, they yet were persecuted and oppressed, and their enemies prevailed at court. But on the other hand, it behoved not a Christian bishop to consent to the admission of an artful sectarian who could agree in form to the Nicene faith, and yet gradually insinuate his poisonous doctrines into the church. What were this but in fact to allow the wolf to enter the sheep-fold, and devour the flock? The mind of Alexander was directed aright in this conjuncture. He spent several days and nights in prayer alone in his church; the faithful followed his example, and prayer was made by the Church without ceasing, that God would interfere on this occasion.

But Constantine himself was not to be prevailed on to admit Arius into the church, unless he could be convinced of his orthodoxy. He sent for him therefore to the palace, and asked him plainly, whether he agreed to the Nicene decrees. The heresiarch, without hesitation, subscribed: the emperor ordered him to swear: he assented to this also. I follow the nar-

careful to tell us that he heard this request
us that he did swear in addition to his
and that this he knew from the emperor
Constantine, whose scruples were now
ordered Alexander to receive him into the
next day. The good bishop had given
fasting and prayer, and renewed his
that day with great fervour in the church
before the altar, and attended by Macarius
was a presbyter belonging to Athanasius
that if Arius was in the right, he himself
live to see the day of contest; but if
true, which he professed, that Arius, the
the evils, might suffer the punishment of
The next day seemed to be a triumph
Arians: the heads of the party paraded
city with Arius in the midst, and drew
of all toward them. When they came
rum of Constantine, a sudden terror, with
of the intestines, seized Arius. In his
sity, he requested to be directed to a place
retirement. Agreeably to the information
he hastened behind the forum; and threw
forth his bowels with a vast effusion of blood.

Such was the exit of the famous Arius.

the word of God, and who remember the case of Hezekiah in the Old Testament, and of Peter in the New. That the danger of the Church from heresy was particularly great at this time, will be equally admitted by all who believe that the Trinitarian doctrine includes within it whatever is most precious and interesting in the gospel: that here on one side an appeal was made to God in his own appointed way, in faith, prayer, patience, and sincerity; while the other side dealt in falsehood, artifice, ambition, and worldly policy, is evident from the narrative. From these premises a man who fears God will feel it his duty to believe that God interposed to comfort his church, and to confound his adversaries. What effect the event had on Constantine, appears not. He died soon after, about the sixty-fifth year of his age, having first received baptism from Eusebius of Nicomedia. This he had long delayed, and the custom, from the imperial example, would naturally gather fresh strength. Superstition had by this time taught men to connect by a necessary union the forgiveness of sins with the administration of the rite: and men who loved to continue in sin protracted their baptism to a time when they imagined it might be of the greatest advantage to them. I have nothing more to say of Constantine's religious character, than that it appears to have been much of the same sort as that of his panegyrist Eusebius, whose pompous life of this emperor gives no very favourable idea of the writer's own views of Christianity.

IV.—THE PROGRESS OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY DURING THE REIGN OF CONSTANTIUS.

The great Constantine was succeeded by three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. The first ruled in Spain and Gaul, the second in the East, the third in Italy and Africa. The other relations of the late emperor were put to death by the soldiers. Two sons alone of Julius his brother survived, Gallus

and Julian. These were spared, privately educated, placed among the clergy, and appointed readers in the church. The latter was born at Constantinople, was only eight years old at the time of his uncle's death, and was reserved to be a scourge of degenerate Christendom, and a memorable instrument of Divine Providence.

Of Constantine the eldest we know but little, and that little is laudable. He sent back Athanasius to his church with great respect, and declared that his father had intended to do the same, but was prevented by death. After a banishment of two years and four months, the bishop returned from Treves to his diocese, where he was received with general acclamations. Asclepas of Gaza and Marcellus of Ancyra, who had been deposed by Arians, with others likewise, were restored; but Constantine himself was slain soon after by the troops of his brother Constans. He was undoubtedly steady in his adherence to the Nicene faith, but our information concerning him is too small to enable us to form any proper estimate of his character.

His next brother, Constantius, furnishes but too many materials to illustrate his disposition. One Eusebius an eunuch, his chamberlain, had great influence over him; and was himself the convert of the Arian priest, whom Constantia had recommended to her brother, and to whom also the dying emperor had intrusted his will. The empress herself, the wife of Constantius, was infected with Arianism. By degrees at least the emperor, a man of a weak understanding, corrupted with the pride of power, and ill informed in any thing that belonged to real Christianity, was confirmed in the fashionable heresy. There was then during this whole reign, which reached from the year 337 to the year 361, a controversy carried on between the church and the heretics by arms and resources suited to the genius of the parties, those of the former were prayers, treatises and

preaching; of the latter, policy, intrigue, persecution, and the friendship of the great. The most zealous supporters of anti-scriptural sentiments seem far more disposed to cultivate the favour of men of rank, than to labour in the work of the ministry among the bulk of mankind.

About the year 340 died the famous Eusebius of Cæsarea. He was the most learned of all the Christians. After viewing him with some attention, I can put no other interpretation on his speculations than that which has been mentioned already. He talks of a necessity that there was in God, to produce a middle power between himself and the angels, to lessen the infinite disproportion between him and the creature. Of the Holy Ghost he speaks still more explicitly, and represents him as one of the things made by the Son. Nevertheless, one might be disposed to put a favourable construction on various expressions of this great man, were it not that his practice is a strong comment on his opinions. He frequented the court, he associated with Arius, he joined in the condemnation of Athanasius. It really gives pain to part on such terms with the historian, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of so many valuable monuments of antiquity; but truth must be spoken, and his case is one of the many, which show that learning and philosophy, unless duly subordinate to the revealed will of God, are no friends to Christian simplicity: however, the loud noise which in our times has been made concerning the doctrine of the Trinity being derived from Platonism, should be silenced, when it is known that it was by admiration of Plato and Origen that Eusebius himself was perverted.

About the same time died Alexander of Constantinople, aged ninety-eight years, who had been bishop twenty-three years. His clergy asked him in his dying moments, whom he would recommend as his successor. 'If you seek a man of exemplary life,

first who secularized the discipline of the church. But in adding the close of the letter, I mean to reader to remark the decline of the spirit of the good at this time. As on the one hand it were very unjust to confound the Athanasians and the Arians as on an equal footing in point of piety and morality, while the superiority of the former is too evident to admit of a dispute; so on the other hand it is certain, from the experimental use of the divinity of Christ, by the means employed an equal degree of the zeal of the patrons with the abstract doctrine itself. Here Athanasius, though always firm and constantly sincere, fails in meekness and charity.

This great man continued in exile at Rome eighteen months, under the protection of Julius, the bishop. Thither fled many others whom the Arian tyranny had expelled from their sees. Eusebius of Constantinople died soon after in the fulness of the prosperity which his iniquity and oppression had procured him. Human depravity under religious appearances had in him attained a rare degree of maturity. And the only lesson which his life affords seems to be this, to warn the clergy to beware of secular ambition, and the spirit of the world, which so exceedingly depraved this dignitary, that he at length became one of the most memorable villains in history. A double election followed his death: that of Paul and that of Macedonius. Hermogenes, master of the militia, was ordered by the emperor to banish Paul. He did so; and Paul's friends, exasperated by a series of persecutions, forgot the character of Christians, and killed Hermogenes. These events took place in or near the year 342. Paul, however, was then banished the city, and his character exempts him from all suspicion of being concerned in the outrage.

At Rome, Julius, in a council of the western bishops, justified Athanasius and his fellow-sufferers. Among these was Marcellus of Ancyra, whose

necessary to support iniquity, and an Arian prince was obliged to tread in the steps of his pagan predecessors, to support what he called the church.

His views were promoted with vigour. Virgins and monks were cruelly treated at Alexandria: Jews and pagans were encouraged to murder Christians. Gregory himself entered the church with the governor and certain pagans, and caused a number of the friends of Athanasius to be scourged and imprisoned. The persecuted prelate himself, who wanted not courage and capacity to resist, acted however a much more Christian part. He fled from the storm, and made his escape to Rome.

While Gregory dealt in violence, his competitor used only the more Christian arms of argument. He published an epistle to the Christian world, exhorting all the bishops to unite on the occasion. 'The faith now begun,' says he, 'it came to us by the Lord from his disciples. Lest what has been preserved in the churches until now perish in our days, and we be called to an account for our stewardship, exert yourselves, my brethren, as stewards of the mysteries of God, and as beholding your rights taken away by strangers.' He goes on to inform them of the proceedings of the Arians, observing that the like had not happened in the church since the ascension of our Saviour. 'If there were any complaint against us, the people should have been assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the spirit of ordination; all things should have been examined regularly, and in the presence of the clergy and people; a stranger should not have been intruded by force and the authority of secular judges, upon a people who neither require nor know him.' He begs the bishops 'not to receive the letters of Gregory, but to tear them, and treat the bearers with disdain as ministers of iniquity.' It cannot be denied, that his arguments were sound, and that his cause was just. *The Arians must bear the infamy of being the*

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The easterns met at Philippopolis, in Thrace, and excommunicated their brethren of the west; and for some time the two parties remained in this position, while in Asia and Egypt the friends of the Nicene faith were treated with great cruelty. Into Europe the subtleties of this contention had not yet entered; men were there more simple, and followed the primitive faith in quietness and peace.

In Antioch the Arian bishop Stephen was found, even by his own party, too corrupt and profligate to be continued in his dignity. Leontius, who succeeded him, supported the Arian cause. Diodorus, an ascetic, and Flavian, afterwards bishop of Antioch, stirred up the faithful to a zeal for religion, and passed whole nights with them at the tombs of the martyrs. Leontius finding them to have the affection of the people, wished them to do this service in the church. And here I apprehend was a nursery of real godliness, but the account is very imperfect.

In the year 349 died Gregory, the secular bishop of Alexandria, as he may be justly called. Then it was that Constantius, intimidated by the threats of his brother Constans, wrote repeatedly to Athanasius to return into the east, and to assure him of his favour and protection. The exiled prelate could not easily credit a man who had persecuted him so unrighteously. At length he complied, and after visiting Julius at Rome, who sent a letter full of tenderness to the church of Alexandria in favour of Athanasius, he travelled to Antioch, where Constantius then was, by whom he was very graciously received. The emperor requested him to forget the past, and assured him with oaths, that he would receive no calumnies against him for the future. While Athanasius was at Antioch, he communicated with the Eustathians, who, under the direction of Flavian held a convocation there. This same Flavian was the first who composed the doxology, 'Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;' and in the singing of the

Psalm, not only those who frequented his meeting made use of it, but in general all who favoured the Nicene faith in the church of Leontius did the same, in opposition to the Arian doxology. Glory to the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Ghost. So earnest were the two parties against each other. Leontius was a confirmed Arian, but of a milder temper than the rest of his party. He saw that it was by force only that he was in possession of his church, numbers of people still professing the Nicene faith. He dared not therefore oppose the Trinitarian hymns, and laboured to preserve peace in his own time, but touching his white hair, he said on the occasion, 'When this snow shall melt, there will be much dirt,' intimating at the dissensions which he imagined would arise after his death.

Constantius observed to Athanasius, that as he now put him into possession of all his Egyptian churches, he ought to leave one for the Arians. The Alexandrian prelate confessed it would be just, on condition also that the same liberty was allowed to the Eustathians at Antioch. The Arian party, however, sensible of the superior popularity of their opponents, thought it most prudent to wave the proposal. The return of Athanasius to Alexandria was a triumph. Religious zeal and joy appeared in the orb of the age, by a number devoting themselves to monastic life. Acts of mercy and liberality were so abundantly performed. Every house seemed to be a church set apart for prayer. Such are the views which Athanasius himself gives us of the effects of his restoration. A number of his enemies retracted, and justified him in the most honourable manner, and among these the recantation of Ursatius and Valens is remarkable. Asclepas was also restored to Gaza, and Marcellus to Ancyra, though the latter was not unmolested. The suspicion of his unsoundness was perhaps justly increased by the less ambiguous sentiments of Photinus bishop of Sirmium, who was

supposed to tread in his steps, and was in a council at that place deposed as a Sabellian by universal consent. Germanius, an Arian, was elected in his stead, and then, as well as at this day, the Sabellians and the Arians, in opposing each other, assaulted the truth, which lay between them: the former removing all distinction between the father and the Son, the latter establishing a distinction which took away the Trinity of the Godhead. Each desired to remove the mystery from the doctrine, and in the attempt corrupted it. While those who were taught of God, and were content with inadequate ideas, sincerely worshipped the Trinity in Unity, and mourned over the abominations of the times.

A great change in civil affairs having taken place by the death of Constans, and the ruin of the usurper Magnentius, Constantius, now sole master of the empire, revived the persecution. About the year 351, Paul of Constantinople was sent into Mesopotamia, loaded with irons, and at length to Cucusus on the confines of Cappadocia. There, after suffering cruel hardships, he was strangled. Macedonius, by an armed force, attended with much effusion of blood, took possession of the see. Paul received the crown of martyrdom, and the Arians seemed ambitious to equal the bloody fame of Galerius.

The weak mind of Constantius was again prejudiced by absurd calumnies against Athanasius, and a council at Milan was convened in the year 355, in the presence of the emperor, who proposed to them an Arian creed, which he recommended by this argument, that God had declared in his favour by his victories. Prosperity, it seems had not strengthened his reasoning powers, but, unhappily, had increased the depravity of his heart. Here appeared the magnanimous constancy of Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari, in Sardinia, and the pious self-denial of Eusebius bishop of Vercellæ, in Italy. These prelates were animated with a sincere spirit of piety on this occa-

sion, and answered that the Nicene faith had always been the faith of the church. 'I ask not your advice,' says the emperor, and you shall not hinder me from following Arius, if I think fit.' The emperor's creed was read in the church; but the people, more sincere and more simple than the great, and more willingly attached to the doctrine of the Trinity, because they read it in their bibles, rejected the faith of Constantius, and it was not pressed any farther. The condemnation of Athanasius was, however, insisted on, and Dionysius, bishop of Milan, and the two others just mentioned, were most unreasonably required to subscribe to it. 'Obey, or be banished,' was the imperious mandate. The bishops lifted up their hands to heaven, and told Constantius, that the empire was not his, but God's, and reminded him of the day of judgment. He drew his sword on them in a rage, but contented himself with ordering their banishment. Hilary, the deacon, was stripped, and scourged, and ridiculed by Ursatius and Valens, who had recanted sometime ago. Hilary blessed God, and bore the indignity as a Christian. The greatest part of the bishops subscribed to the condemnation of Athanasius: a few only testified that the grace of God was still as powerful as ever, in supporting his people, and in causing them to suffer gladly, rather than to sin. Others, besides the three mentioned above, joined in the same measure, particularly Maximus, bishop of Naples, who was tortured in hopes of forcing his submission, because of the weakness of his body. In the end he was banished, and died in exile.

Eusebius, of Vercellæ, was sent into Palestine, Lucifer into Syria, and Dionysius into Cappadocia, where he died soon after. Liberius of Rome was in an advanced age, when the storm which had murmured at a distance, burst upon him. He was carried before Constantius, at Milan, where the eunuch, Eusebius, the secret and prevalent supporter of Arian-

nism, assisted the emperor in oppressing him. Liberius, said 'Though I were single, the cause of the faith would not fail. There was a time when three persons only were found who resisted a regal ordinance.' Eusebius understanding his allusion to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered, 'Do you make the emperor a Nebuchadnezzar?' 'No,' said the bishop of Rome, but you are not less unreasonable than he, in desiring to condemn a man unheard.' In the conclusion Liberius was banished into Thrace. But a character still more venerable than his was yet unsubdued, and the Arians, fiercely pursuing their victories, proceeded to the attack. Hosius, bishop of Corduba, in Spain, was now a hundred years old. He was looked on as the first of bishops, had been a confessor under the Dioclesian persecution, had presided sixty years in the church, had guided the Nicene council, had been a principal person in the appointment of canons, and was held in universal respect. Constantius and the whole Christian party were sensible of the importance of such a character. Flattery and menaces were both employed to prevail on him to condemn Athanasius. A few lines of his answer to an imperious letter of the emperor's may give us some idea of his spirit. 'I confessed the first time in the persecution under Maximian, your great-grandfather. If you likewise desire to persecute me, I am ready still to suffer any thing rather than betray the truth. It is not so much a personal malice against Athanasius, as the love of heresy which influences these men. I myself invited them to come to me, and declare at the council of Sardica what they knew against him. They dared not; they all refused. Athanasius came afterwards to your court at Antioch: he desired his enemies might be sent for, that they might make good their accusations. Why do you still hearken to them who refused such fair proposals! How can you endure Ursatius and Valens, after they have retorted and

acknowledged their calumny in writing? Remember you are a mortal man; be afraid of the day of judgment. God hath given you the empire, and hath committed the church to our care. I write thus through my concern for your eternal welfare: but with respect to your requisition, I cannot agree with Ariana, nor write against Athanasius. You act for his enemies, but in the day of judgment you must defend yourself alone.' Constantius kept him a year at Sirmium, without respect to his age and infirmities. His orders addressed to the bishops were to condemn Athanasius, and to communicate with the Arians under pain of banishment. The judges were directed to see to the execution of these things. Ursatius and Valens, whose instability should have destroyed their credit, assisted the persecution by informations: zealous heretics by force of arms were intruded in the place of the exiled, and Arianism seemed well nigh to have avenged the cause of fallen idolatry.

The adventures of Athanasius himself in his sufferings were extraordinary. He was for some time preserved in the house of a pious woman with great care and fidelity. But we must not enlarge on the various hardships to which he was exposed: suffice it to mention some of the particular circumstances. Syrianus, a secular officer, came at night to his principal church at Alexandria, when the people were intent on their devotions. Numbers were murdered, others insulted and beaten. The intrepid prelate sat still in his chair, and directed the deacon to sing the 136th psalm, the people answering, according to the custom of alternate singing, "For his mercy endureth for ever." Which being finished, he bade the people to return to their houses. As the soldiers advanced toward him, his clergy and people begged him to depart, which he refused, thinking it his duty to stay till they had all left the church. He was in a manner forced out by the clergy and monks, and conveyed safe from the guards. An unavailing

protest was made by the people against these violences.

The pagans took courage, and assisted the heretics in the persecution, saying, the Arians have embraced our religion. A bishop was found worthy to support these proceedings, George of Cappadocia, who began his usurpation in the year 356. Through his influence, supported by the secular arm, the friends of the Nicene faith were cruelly beaten, and some died under their anguish. A sub-deacon having been severely scourged, was sent to the mines, without being allowed time to dress his wounds, and he died on the road. Venerable aged bishops were sent into the deserts throughout Egypt, and Arianism reigned and glutted itself in blood. The episcopal office was sold to unworthy men; the profession of Arianism being the only requisite for the office. The cruelties of George provoked the Alexandrians to retaliation, but military force prevailed; and after this bishop had been once expelled, he returned still more terrible and more detested.

So deplorably misinformed was Constantius, that in a letter to the people of Alexandria, he represented this same George as one who was very capable of instructing others in heavenly things. Athanasius having obtained a sight of this letter, was, at length, deterred from his intended journey to the emperor, and betook himself to the deserts, and visited the monks, his most faithful adherents, who refused to discover him to his persecuting adversaries, and offered their throats to the sword, being ready to die for the Nicene faith. He filled up another part of his time in writing his own apology to Constantius. There are in it strong traces of that rapid eloquence and clear reasoning, for which this father is renowned. Integrity and fervour appear throughout; but it were to be wished, that less zeal on his own account, and more on account of his Divine Master, were visible in this as well as in his other writings.

In truth, the connection of the doctrine of the Trinity with the honour of Christ, and with lively faith in his mediation, is so plain, that practical, serious, humble religion, if it exist at all in any scene of controversy, must be found on that side. Men, who degrade the Divine Saviour into a creature, will, of course, exalt themselves, and cannot have that humility and faith which are the essential ingredients of a holy life.

Eusebius of Vercellæ, one of the most honest and pious bishops of those times, still suffered severely in Palestine in his banishment. The persecution reached even to Gaul, which had yet happily preserved the simplicity of apostolical confession unmolested. In Constantinople, Macedonius, by the terror of his persecutions, drove those of the general church and the Novatian dissenters, into a sympathy for each other, which their mutual prejudices had long prevented. Both sorts suffered extremely, being obliged to communicate with Arians, or to undergo a variety of hardships. Agelius, the Novatian bishop, fled. A priest and a monk of theirs were tortured, and the latter died by this usage. Novatianism still retained a measure of the divine Spirit, and was honoured with furnishing those who suffered for Jesus. This people had three churches in Constantinople, one of which was thrown down by the emperor's orders. The Novatians carried away the materials to the other side of the sea: the women and children wrought diligently, and thus it was rebuilt. In the next reign, by the emperor's permission, they carried back the materials, and rebuilt their church at Constantinople, and called it Anastatia. An attempt was now made to re-unite those of the general church with the Novatians: the former were the more ready, because they had no place of worship at all; but the narrow bigotry, which had *ever been the great fault of Novatianism*, prevented the union. But we must now mention a remarkable

instance of human infirmity, which calls at once for compassion and for caution. Hosius had been a year confined at Sirmium, his relations were persecuted, and he suffered in his own person both scourges and tortures. By thus afflicting him, the Arian tyrant thought he served the cause; and by such inhuman measures were the patrons of the heresy stimulated to seek the destruction of godliness! Yet so infatuated was the spirit of Constantius, that he all along was liberally supporting the most expensive forms and ornaments of Christian worship, while he was labouring, with all his might, to eradicate Christian doctrine. Hosius, above a hundred years old, submitted at length to subscribe an Arian creed, but the condemnation of Athanasius he would not vindicate. Permitted, at length, to return into Spain, he lived, however, to retract, protesting against the violence with which he had been treated, and with his last breath exhorting all men to reject the heresy of Arius; and thus we have seen to his end the most venerable character of that age, still in his heart true to his God. The length of his days only exposed him to a greater variety of suffering, and though Satan's malice was permitted to do him much mischief, he yet was enabled to die in peace, and to prove that the Lord faileth not them that are his.

In the same year, 357, Liberius of Rome, after two years exile, was not only prevailed on to receive an Arian creed, but even to reject Athanasius. The subscription to the creed was not so much an evidence of insincerity, as was the condemnation of the Alexandrian prelate, because the Arians, fertile in expedients, made creeds upon creeds, expressed in artful ambiguities, to impose on the unwary. Liberius, by these unworthy means, recovered his bishopric. The see of Rome, at that time, had secular charms sufficient to seduce a worldly mind. Whether Liberius cordially repented of his hypocrisis

or not, we have no evidence. The cruelty of the Arians tried to the utmost the hearts of men in those days, and now the proverb was verified, 'All the world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against all the world.'

But the power of divine grace was displayed during this disastrous season in preserving a remnant, and particularly in strengthening the mind of that great man, through a long course of afflictions. He composed, about this time a letter to the monks, in which he confesses the extreme difficulty of writing concerning the divinity of the Son of God, though it be easy to confute the heretics. He owns his ignorance, and calls himself a mere babbler, and beseeches the brethren to receive what he wrote, not as a perfect explanation of the divinity of the Word, but as a confutation of the enemies of that doctrine.

Two councils were held, the one at Rimini, the other at Seleucia, both with a view to support Arianism. In the former, a number of good men were artfully seduced, by the snares of the Arians, to agree to what they did not understand. This sect, now victorious every where, began to show itself disunited, and to separate into two parties. But it is not worth while to trouble the reader with idle niceties, in which proud men involved themselves, while all had forsaken the simple faith of antiquity. In these confusions, Macedonius lost the see of Constantinople, which was given to Eudoxius, translated from Antioch, in the year 360. Constantius poorly endeavoured to atone for the corruptions both of principle and practice, with which he filled the church, by offering large vessels of gold and silver, carpets for the altar of gold tissue, adorned with precious stones, curtains of gold and divers colours, for the doors of the church, and also liberal donatives to the clergy, the virgins, and the widows.

The see of Antioch being vacant, Meletius, bishop of Sebasta, a man of exemplary meekness and piety,

was chosen. The Arians supposed him to be of their party. Constantius ordered the new bishop to preach before him on the controversial subject of the Trinity; Meletius delivered himself with Christian sincerity, rebuked the rashness of men who strove to fathom the divine nature, and exhorted his audience to adhere to the simplicity of the faith. He had remained only a month in Antioch, and had the honour to be banished by the emperor, who filled up the see with Euzoius, the old friend of Arius. In consequence of this, the friends of Meletius separated from the Arians, and held their assemblies in the ancient church, which had been the first at Antioch. Besides the Arians, who were in possession of the emperor's favour, there were two parties both sound in the Nicene faith, the Eustathians, before spoken of, and the Meletians, who testified in the strongest manner their regard for their exiled pastor. In the year 361, however, Constantius died of a fever, having received baptism a little before he expired, from Euzoius; for, after his father's example, he had deferred it till this time. His character needs no detail: it appeared from his case, that a weak man, armed with despotic power, was capable of doing incredible mischief in the church of Christ.

V.—A VIEW OF MONASTICISM AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY UNDER CONSTANTINE, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS.

IT seemed most convenient to preserve the connexion of the Arian controversy without interruption. If the evangelical reader has not gained much information concerning the spirit of true religion, during this violent contest, the times and the materials must bear the blame. There were probably, in that whole period, many sincere souls, who mourned in secret over

the abominations of the age; but history, ever partial to the great, and dazzled with the splendor of kings and bishops, condescends not to notice them. The people of God were in lower life, and remain, therefore unknown. We left Athanasius in the desert, where he employed the leisure, which the iniquity of the persecution gave him in visiting the monks. He had been acquainted with their most renowned leader Anthony, but had not the satisfaction to meet with him again, he dying in the beginning of the year 356. Let us leave Athanasius and the Arian controversy awhile, and see what we can find concerning the monks, and other particulars of the dealings of God with his Church in the mean time.

We are not to form an idea of ancient monks from modern ones. It was a mistaken thing in holy men of old to retire altogether from the world. But there is every reason to believe the mistake originated in piety. We often hear it said, How ridiculous to think of pleasing God by austerities and solitude! Far be it from me to vindicate the superstitions of monks, and particularly the vows of celibacy. But the error is very natural, has been reprehended much too severely, and the profaneness of men of the world is abundantly more dangerous. The enormous evils of Monasticism are to be ascribed to its degeneracy in aftertimes, not to its first institution. What could, for instance, be better intentioned, than the determination of Anthony to follow literally our Lord's rule, "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor?" Say that he was ignorant and superstitious; he was both: but he persevered to the age of a hundred and five years in voluntary poverty with admirable consistency. Surely it could be no slight cause that could move a young person of opulence to part with all, and live in the abstemiousness of a solitary life with such unshaken perseverance. Let us, from the *memorials of his life*, written by Athanasius, omitting *the miracles which the then fashionable credulity*

imposed on men, endeavour to collect, as far as we can, a just idea of his spirit.

Athanasius tells us that he had often seen him, and had received information concerning him from his servant. It was a great disadvantage to Anthony's judgment, that he was unwilling to be instructed in literature. There is a medium in all things secular. We have seen numbers corrupted by an excess of literary attachments: we see here one misled by the want of proper cultivation. When a youth he had heard read in the church our Lord's words to the rich young man, and his ignorance led him to sell all, and give to the poor, and enter into the monastic life. Monks, as yet, had not learned to live in perfect deserts unconnected with mankind, and hitherto they lived at a small distance from their own village. Anthony endeavoured to form himself on the several models, and pushed the genius of solitude to rigour before unknown. His fame increased; he was looked on as a mirror of perfection, and the Egyptians were studious to follow his example. His instructions to those who listened to him are not, in general, worth transcribing. The faith of Christ is very obscure, at least in the best of them; yet his sincerity is evident: his love to divine things must have been ardent, in conflicts and temptations, which are confusedly written by Athanasius, demonstrated a mind too humble, and knowing too much of himself, to trust in his own righteousness. He preached well by his life, and temper, and spirit, however he might fail in doctrinal knowledge.

In the persecution by Dioclesian he left his beloved solitude, and came to Alexandria, strengthening the minds of Christian sufferers, exposing himself to danger for the love of the brethren, and yet not guilty of the excess of delivering up himself to martyrdom. In all this there was what was better than the monk,—the sincere and charitable Christian. So did he observe to perfection the rules of wisdom.

There were two sorts of monks, the solitary, and those who lived in societies. Anthony, though he had a strong inclination to follow the first sort altogether, sometimes joined the latter, and even on some occasions appeared in the world.

The Arian heresy gave him another opportunity of showing his zeal. He again entered Alexandria, and protested against its impiety, which, he observed, was of a piece with heathenism itself. 'Be assured,' said he, 'all nature is moved with indignation against those who reckon the Creator of all things to be a creature.' And this is one circumstance, which convinces me, that genuine godliness, the offspring of Christian principles, must have been with the primitive monks, because they generally vindicated the Nicene faith, and could not endure Arianism. They must, many of them, at least, have felt the motions of the divine life, which will not connect itself with any principles that depreciate the dignity of Jesus Christ.

In conversing with Pagan philosophers, he observed, that Christianity held the mystery, not in the wisdom of Grecian reasoning, but in the power of faith supplied to them from God by Jesus Christ. 'Faith,' says he, 'springs from the affection of the mind; Logic from artificial contrivance. Those who have the energy that is by faith, need not perhaps the demonstration that comes by reasoning.' He very justly appealed to the glorious fruits of Christianity in the world, and exhorted the philosophers 'to believe and know that the Christian art is not merely verbal, but of faith which worketh by love, with which ye being once endowed, shall not need demonstrations by arguments, but shall deem these words of Anthony sufficient to lead you to the faith of Christ.'

The evangelical reader will see here something better than mere monasticism. But he sullied all this by a foolish attempt, to make mankind believe, that he lived without food, while he ate in secret,

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At the very time when Athanasius was persecuted at Tyre, and was thought unworthy to live at Alexandria, the bishops were employed also in dedicating the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Its magnificence was a monument of the ostentatious superstition of Constantine. It is foreign to our design to describe its expensive pomp. On this occasion, Jerusalem, which from the time of Adrian had been called in *Ælia*, recovered its name, became the resort of Christian pilgrims, was vainly represented by some as the new Jerusalem described by the prophets, and was held in great veneration by sermons, acts of liberality, and panegyrics on the emperor. In these things the historian Eusebius was signally distinguished. Here Arius was received; and thus that scripture was fulfilled concerning the hypocrisy of professors of religion in the Christian times, 'Your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.' The enmity against real godliness was varnished with a parade of external piety; pomp supplied the room of sincerity, and formality usurped the place of spiritual understanding.

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and by a vain parade of conversation concerning temperance, which savoured more of Pythagorean fanaticism than of Christian piety. In his extreme old age he gave particular directions, that his body should be interred, not preserved in a house after the Egyptian manner of honouring deceased saints and martyrs, and charged his two attendants to let no man know the place of his burial. 'At the resurrection of the dead I shall receive my body,' says he, 'from the Saviour incorruptible.' He guarded his friends against the Arian heresy, and bade them not be disturbed, though the judicial power, an imaginary fading domination, should be against them. 'Do ye observe what ye have received from the fathers, and particularly the pious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which ye have heard from the Scriptures, and of which I have often reminded you. Divide my clothes in this manner: Give one of my sheep-skins to the bishop Athanasius, together with the garment which I received from him when new, and now return him when old. And give the other sheep-skin to Serapion the bishop. The sackcloth keep for yourselves,' says he to his two attendants. 'Farewell, children, Anthony is going, and is no more with you.' He stretched out his feet, and appearing pleased at the sight of his friends coming to him, he expired with evident marks of cheerfulness on his face.

If we look to the situation of the ancient heretics, we find them in a dwindling state. The followers of Marcion, Valentinian, and the rest, still subsisted indeed, and an edict of Constantine forbade their assembling together. Under this act of uniformity the Novatians were condemned also. Thus the best of the Dissenters were not permitted to worship in their own way, while the Donatists, the worst, were in a manner tolerated. But in vain do we look either for wisdom or equity in the ecclesiastical proceedings of Constantine or any of his successors.

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ledge of divine things. Be not astonished, says he, if an emperor writes to us. He is but a man: rather be astonished, that God should write a book for man, and deliver it to us by his own Son. He answered the emperor, desiring him not to esteem present things, to think of the future judgment, to remember that Jesus Christ is the true and eternal king; to be merciful, to do justice, and particularly to take care of the poor.

Under Constantius an attempt was made to reunite the Donatists to the general church. The consequence was, that a number were formally recovered to it. The body of them remained, what they always were, an unworthy people, and they had among them a sort of wild licentious persons called Circumcelliones, who were very violent and ferocious in their conduct.

About the beginning of the century, a Tyrian philosopher, named Meropius, possessed of the spirit of travelling, explored the interior parts of India as runs the narrative, but from internal evidence we conclude that Abyssinia was the country meant. He took with him two boys, his relations, who understood the Greek tongue. Arriving at a certain harbour, the natives murdered the whole company, except the two boys, who were presented to the king, and finding favour in his eyes, were promoted in his court. Upon the king's death, the queen dowager engaged them to superintend the affairs of the realm, and the education of the young prince. Their names were *Ædesius* and *Frumentus*. But the latter was prime minister. The man, however, had his eyes fixed on higher objects than the politics of the country. He met with some Roman merchants, who traded there, and asked them if they found any Christians in the kingdom. Having discovered some by their means, he encouraged them to associate for the purposes of religious worship, and at length erected a church for their use, and certain rules

instructed in the gospel, were converted to the faith. On the king's accession to the administration, Frumentius desired leave to return to his own country, which both the king and his mother were very reluctant to allow. He left the country, however, with *Ædesius*. The latter returned to his relations at Tyre, while Frumentius, arriving at Alexandria, communicated his adventures to *Athanasius* the bishop, and informed him of the probability of evangelizing the country, if missionaries were sent thither. On mature consideration, *Athanasius* told him, that none was so fit for the office as himself. He consecrated him therefore the first bishop of the Indians; and this active missionary, returning to a country where his integrity and capacity had already been distinguished, preached the gospel with much success, and erected many churches.

The Iberians were a people bordering on the black sea, who, in some military excursion, took prisoner a pious Christian woman, whose sanctity of manners engaged the respect of these barbarians. *Socrates* mentions several miracles which God wrought by her means. The credibility of such divine interpositions much depends on the importance of circumstances. The situation of things rendered it probable, that such divine interpositions might take place; but I shall mention only those which may seem worthy of some credit. A child of the king's was sent to the women of the country to be cured, if any of them knew a proper method of treating it, a well-known ancient custom. The case baffled the skill of them all, and the child was committed to the captive woman. 'Christ,' said she, 'who healed many, will also heal this infant.' She prayed, and he recovered. In the same manner the queen herself was healed of a distemper some time after. 'It is not my work,' said she, 'but that of Christ the Son of God, the maker of the world.' The king sent her presents in token of his gratitude. But she sent them back,

played to the king whom she had seen,
was instantly dispersed, and the king
home. In consequence of this event, a
conferences with the woman, both the
queen embraced the gospel, and exhorted
jects to receive it. An embassy was sent
time to desire that pastors might be con-
instruct them. The emperor gave the
very gracious reception.

The ecclesiastical accounts of Britain
lous, or at best so scanty, that it is a p-
able to relate any thing that has the mat-
rical authenticity. At the council of Ar-
on account of the Arian heresy, the em-
stantius gave orders to supply the exp-
bishops out of the public treasury. Who
accepted the imperial munificence, the
Gaul and Britain thought it unbecom-
siastical character to receive secular
and bore their own expenses. Only
Britain were so poor, that they were un-
tain themselves. Their brethren offered
tribution, to supply their wants; but
rather to be obliged to the emperor's
to burthen their brethren.

Christianity was established in Britain.

under its king Tiridates had embraced Christianity, and by means of commerce had conveyed it into Persia, where Christians began to be numerous.

But there they sustained a very grievous persecution from king Sapor, in the time of Constantine ; a long account of which we have in Sozomen. The reader has seen many things of the same kind in former persecutions ; I shall only observe therefore in general, that thousands chose rather to suffer for the name of Christ, than to pollute themselves with the worship of the sun ; that the Magi and the Jews were peculiarly instrumental in this persecution, and that the people of God suffered here with so much sincerity and fortitude, as to evince that the Lord had many people belonging to himself in Persia.

Paganism had been now for some length of time suffering a rapid decline. The first measures of Constantine, after his success in Italy, were to place Christianity on an equal footing with paganism by the laws, while he gradually patronized the church more and more. Among other improvements in the political and judiciary state of the empire, he abolished the barbarous punishment of crucifixion. After he was become sole master of the empire, he forbade the private exercise of divination, the great bulwark of false religion, still allowing the public use of it at the altars and temples ; and sometime after he prohibited the worst branches of sorcery and magic. He took particular care to secure the observation of the Lord's day, and ordered it to be set apart for prayer and holy exercises. He openly declared, that he would not oblige men to be Christians, though he earnestly desired they would become so ; nor did he abolish the rites of the temples. Finding, however, the pagans extremely obstinate in the preservation of their superstitions, he publicly exposed the mysteries which had hitherto been kept secret, melted down golden statues, and caused brazen ones to be drawn by ropes through the streets

of Constantinople. And some of the temples which had been scenes of horrible wickedness, he destroyed.

In Egypt the famous cubit, with which the priests were wont to measure the height of the Nile, was kept in the temple of Serapis. This by Constantine's order was removed to the church at Alexandria. The pagans beheld the removal with indignation, and ventured to predict, that the Nile would no longer overflow its banks. Divine providence, however, favoured the schemes of Constantine, and the Nile the next year overflowed the country in an uncommon degree. In this gradual manner was paganism overturned; sacrifices in a partial manner still continued, but the entire destruction of idolatry seemed to be at hand. The temples stood for the most part, though much defaced and deprived of their former dignity and importance. The sons of Constantine trode in his steps, and gradually proceeded in the demolition of paganism. Under them we find an express edict for the abolition of sacrifices.

Magnentius, the usurper, while master of Rome, allowed the Gentiles to celebrate their sacrifices in the night: but Constantius immediately after his victory took away this indulgence, and solemnly prohibited magic in all its various forms. He also took away the altar and image of victory, which stood in the portico of the capitol. In truth, this emperor was by no means wanting in zeal against idolatry, though his unhappy controversial spirit in defence of Arianism rendered him rather an enemy than a friend to vital godliness.

Such was the state of paganism at the death of Constantius. Pagans were, however, exceedingly numerous, and enjoyed with silent pleasure the shameful scenes of Arian controversy in the church. Nor were they hopeless. The eyes of the votaries of the gods were all directed to his successor, the warlike, the enterprising, the zealous Julian, a determined foe of the gospel. Great things had been done

for the church ; but its rulers of the house of Constantine were weak, and void of true piety. In the warm imaginations of many zealous devotees, even Jupiter himself, seemed likely to grow terrible again, and to be again adored. This last struggle of expiring paganism, marked as it is with signal instances of providence, will deserve particular attention.

VI.—THE CHURCH UNDER JULIAN.

A GREATER zealot for paganism than Julian, is not to be found in the history of mankind. Temper, talents, power, and resentment, all conspired to cherish his superstitious attachments. Whoever duly attends to the plan which he formed to subvert Christianity, will see the union of a solid judgment with indefatigable assiduity. Neither address nor dexterity was wanted. All that the wit and prudence of man could do was attempted.

Constantius ought to have reflected, that by cruelty and injustice in sacrificing the relations of Julian, he excited his hatred against Christianity. The case of Julian deserves commiseration, though it cannot admit of apology. What had he seen excellent or comely in the effects of the gospel on his uncle or cousins ? What a prospect did he behold in the face of the Christian church, torn with factions, and deformed by ambition ! The same vices under which the heathen world groaned, appeared but too visible at present among Christians. These things, joined with the resentment of family wrongs, determined him early in life in favour of the old religion. He was made a public reader in the church of Nicomedia, and affected a zeal for Christianity during the greatest part of the reign of Constantius. Had he read the New Testament with attention, and prayed over it with seriousness, he might have seen that the doctrines there inculcated led to a conduct *very opposite to that which he beheld in the then leaders of the Christian world, both civil and eccle-*

siastical. A tenth part of the study which he employed on the profane classics, might have sufficed for this. But like many infidels in all ages, he did not seem to have paid any attention to the scriptures, nor even to have known what their doctrines really are. From his youth he practised dissimulation with consummate artifice. One Maximus, a philosopher and magician, confirmed him in his pagan views; he secretly held correspondence with Libanius, the pagan sophist; and openly attempted to erect a church; he studied all day, and sacrificed at night. He offered up his prayers in the church public, and at midnight rose to perform his devotions to Mercury. His residence at Athens completed his knowledge of the fashionable philosophy in fine, no person was ever more admirably qualified to act the part which he did, when he succeeded Constantius.

This happened in the year 361. He ordered the temples to be set open, those that were decayed to be repaired, and new ones to be built, where there was a necessity. He fined the persons who had made use of the materials of the temples which had been demolished, and set apart the money, thus collected, for the erection of new ones. Altars were every where set up, and the whole machinery of Paganism was again brought into use. Altars, fires, blood, perfumes, and priests attending the sacrifices, were every where visible, and the imperial palace itself had its temple and furniture. The first thing he did every morning was to sacrifice, and by his presence and example he encouraged the practice among all his subjects. Heathenism held up its head, and Christians were every where insulted. He repealed the laws made against idolatry, and confirmed its ancient honours and privileges.

He endeavoured, in imitation of Christians, also to erect schools for the education of youth. Lectures of religion, stated times of prayer, monasteries

devout persons, hospitals and almshouses for the poor and diseased and for strangers; these things he particularly recommends in a letter to Arsacius, the chief-priest of Galatia. He tells him what it was that advanced the impious religion of the Christians; their kindness to strangers, their care in burying the dead, and their affected gravity. He bids him warn the priests to avoid play-houses and taverns, and sordid employments. Hospitals should be erected in every city for the reception of all sorts of indigent persons. The Galileans, he observes, relieve both their own poor and ours.

It was, however, a refinement of policy far beyond the maxims of that age, and a proof of the native sagacity and good sense of Julian, that, young and impetuous as he was, he could abstain from open persecution himself, and yet connive at it in others, who knew what was agreeable to their master. He boasted of mildness in this respect, and contrasted himself with Galerius and the rest of the persecutors, observing, that they had augmented, rather than lessened, the number of Christians. For, give them only occasion, said he, and they will crowd as fast to martyrdom as bees fly to their hives. Yet a number suffered for the gospel under his reign, though not by the forms of avowed persecution.

The bishops and inferior clergy were beheld with an eye of rancour, at once ingenious and determined. In truth, they are in all ages the object of peculiar malevolence to men who love darkness rather than light. Persecuting emperors and atheistical philosophers unite in this respect. Julian charged them with seditiousness; had he been a citizen of a free state, he would, with equal falsehood and with equal malice, have charged them with supporting tyranny. To deprive the church of the inspection of its pastors, he seized their incomes, abrogated their *immunities*, exposed them to civil burdens and *offices*, and occasionally expelled them by fraud or

violence. At Antioch the treasures of the church were seized, the clergy obliged to flee, and the churches shut up. The same was done at Cyzicus, without any shadow of sedition. At Bostra he threatened Titus the bishop, that if any mutiny happened, he should lay the blame on him and his clergy: and when the bishop assured him, that though the inhabitants were chiefly Christian, they lived peaceably and quietly under his government, he wrote back to the city, charging him with calumniating their character, and exhorting them to expel him. In other places he found pretences for imprisoning and torturing the pastors.

The vigilant malice of the apostate surveyed every advantage, and seized it with consummate dexterity. Nor can the enemies of the gospel, in any age, find a school more fruitful in the lessons of persecution than this before us. A man so perfectly Grecian as this emperor, must have hated or despised the Jews, and Moses must have been as really an object of his derision as St. Paul. But to advance and encourage the Jews in their secular concerns, was one of the obvious means of depreciating Christianity. Hence he spake of them with compassion, begged their prayers for his success in the Persian wars, and pressed them to rebuild their temple, and restore their worship. He himself promised to defray the expense out of the exchequer, and appointed an officer to superintend the work. To strengthen the hands of such determined enemies of Christianity, and to invalidate the Christian prophecies concerning the desolation of the Jews, were objects highly desirable indeed to the mind of Julian. But the enterprize was suddenly baffled, and the workmen were obliged to desist. No historical fact, since the days of the apostles seems better attested. I shall state very briefly the fact itself and its proofs, and then leave the reader to judge whether there was ever any reason to doubt its credibility.

Ammianus Marcellinus, a writer of unquestionable credibility, and at least no friend of the gospel, acquaints us with the attempt, and informs us of its defeat. 'He projected to rebuild the magnificent temple of Jerusalem. He committed the conduct of the affair to Alypius of Antioch; who set himself to the vigorous execution of his charge, and was assisted by the governor of the province; but horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundations with repeated attacks, rendered the place inaccessible to the scorched workmen from time to time, and the element resolutely driving them to a distance, the enterprise was dropped.' Socrates observes, that during the progress of this affair the Jews menaced the Christians, and threatened to retort upon them the evils which they had suffered from the Romans.

The suppression of learning among the Christians was another of the objects of Julian's policy. He published a law, that no professor of any art or science should practise in any place without the approbation of the court of that city, and the sanction of the emperor. With a view to keep the church in ignorance of the arts of reasoning and philosophy, he forbade Christian schoolmasters to teach Gentile learning, lest being furnished, says he, with our armour, they make war upon us with our own weapons. Our learning is unnecessary to Christians, who are trained up to an illiterate rusticity, so that to believe is sufficient for them; and by this prohibition I only restore possessions to their proper owners. The scheme was highly prudent, but it required a great length of time, to produce any considerable effects.

Philosophy had ever been the determined foe of the gospel. It behoved the artful persecutor, himself a philosopher, to encourage it as much as possible. He expressed his hearty wishes, that all the books of the wicked Galileans were banished out of the world. But as this was now impossible, he directed

the philosophers to bend all their powers against them. Jamblicus, Libanius, Maximus, and others of the philosophic tribe, were his intimate friends and counsellors, and the empire was filled with incentives against the gospel. Its enemies were liberally paid for their labours, and Julian seemed desirous to put it to the proof, whether indeed "the foolishness of God was wiser than men."

He used ensnaring artifices to draw unwary Christians into compliance with pagan superstitions. He was wont to place the images of the heathen gods near his own statues, that those who bowed to the latter might seem to adore also the former. Those who seemed thus to comply, he endeavoured to persuade into greater compliances; those who refused, he charged with treason, and proceeded against them as delinquents. He ordered the soldiers, when they received their donative, to throw a piece of frankincense into the fire in honour of the gods. Some few Christians who had been surprised into the practice, returned to the emperor, threw back their donatives, and professed their readiness to die for their religion.

On some occasions Julian would defile the fountains with Gentile sacrifices, and sprinkle the food brought to market with hallowed water. Christians knew their privilege from St. Paul's well-known determination of the case, yet they groaned under the indignity. Juventinus, and Maximus, two officers of his guard, expostulated with great warmth against these proceedings, and so provoked his resentment, that he punished them capitally, though, with that caution which never forsook him, he declared, that he put them to death not as Christians, but as unfaithful subjects.

Jupiter had in no age possessed so zealous a devotee as this prince, who lived at the close of his religious dominion over mankind. The Decurions and the Galerinses, compared with Julian, were

savages. It is certain that no ingenuity could have contrived measures more dexterously. Disgrace, poverty, contempt, a moderate degree of severity, checked and disciplined by dissimulation, and every method of undermining the human spirit, were incessantly labouring to subvert Christianity. One sees not how the scheme could have failed, had Providence permitted this prudent and active genius to have proceeded many years in this course: but what a worm is man, when he sets himself to oppose his Maker!

The people of God, with light very faint, were in a low state (torn within by the Arian controversy) and scandalized by the madness of the Donatists. The faithful sons and pastors of the church were by no means simple and intelligent in divine things, and were menaced even with destruction, by a persecution conducted with as much malice and vigour as any of the foregoing, and with far greater dexterity. The Christian bishops, however, took advantage of Julian's affected moderation to return to their sees. Meletius came back to Antioch; Lucifer of Cagliari, and Eusebius of Vercellæ, returned to their churches; but Athanasius remained still in the desert, because of the power of George at Alexandria. Julian wrote a letter to Photinus the heretic, and commended his zeal against the divinity of Jesus Christ. He ordered Eusebius of Cyzicus, under severe penalties, to rebuild the church of the Novatians, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius; a punishment probably just, though, like every thing else done by Julian concerning the Christian religion, contrived by him with malignant intentions. He protected the Donatists in Africa, and defended them against the general church and against one another.

Cæsarius, the brother of the famous Gregory Nazianzen, continued to practise physic at court, as he had done in the former reign. His brother wrote to

him, how grievous a thing it was to himself and to their aged father (the bishop of Nazianzum in Cappadocia) that he should continue in the court of an infidel, seeking worldly greatness. 'Our mother,' says he, 'could not endure the account. Such the weakness of her sex, and such the fervour of her piety, we are obliged to conceal the truth from her.' Cæsarius profited by these rebukes; not all the artifices of Julian could move him. 'I am a Christian,' says he, 'and must continue so.' Cæsarius quitted the court, and retired to his pious father, who was much delighted with his son's conduct, as earthly-minded parents would have been displeased.

Among the officers of the army was Valentinian, afterwards emperor. He commanded the guards who attended Julian. The emperor one day entered into the temple of Fortune, and on each side of the entrance stood the door-keepers, who sprinkled with sacred water those who came in. A drop of this water falling on Valentinian's mantle, he struck the officer with his fist, expressed his resentment at his heart defiled with the impure water, and tore that part of his mantle. Julian, incensed at his boldness, banished him from his presence, not for his Christianity, as he pretended, but because he had not kept his cohort in good order. Sensible, however, of his merit, he still employed him in the army. There were others who like Valentinian defended their Christian profession not with meekness, but wrath. They found, however, the punishment of their folly from Julian, whose partiality and prejudices in favour of paganism urged him to adopt measures which filled the whole empire with confusion.

At Merum, a city of Phrygia, Amachius the governor of the province ordered the temple to be opened, and the idols to be cleansed. Three Christians, inflamed, says my author, with Christian zeal, could not bear the indignity. Burning, continues he, with an incredible love of virtue, they rushed in

night into the temple, and broke all the images. The governor, in his wrath, being about to chastise many innocent persons, the culprits very generously offered themselves to punishment. He gave them the alternative, to sacrifice, or to die. They preferred the latter, and suffered death with excruciating tortures; more admirable for fortitude than meekness in their behaviour during their dying scenes.

At Pessinus in Galatia, on the confines of Phrygia, two young men suffered death in the presence of Julian. I wish I could say it was for professing the faith of Christ. But one of them had overturned an idol. The emperor put him to death in a cruel manner, with his companion, their mother, and the bishop of the city.

At Ancyra, the capital of Galatia, there was a priest named Basil, who in the former reign had opposed Arianism, and now with equal sincerity resisted idolatry. He went through the city, publicly exhorting the people to avoid polluting themselves with sacrifices. Once observing the Gentiles employed in their religious rites, he sighed, and besought God, that no Christian might be guilty of such enormity. The governor upon this apprehended him, charging him with sedition, and having tortured him, kept him in prison. Julian himself coming to Ancyra, sent for Basil, who reproached him with his apostacy. Julian said, he had intended to dismiss him, but was obliged to treat him severely on account of his impudence. And in the end this priest suffered death in torture. Busiris was an heretic of the sect of the Abstemious, and was tortured at the same place. His constancy was amazing to the beholders; but he outlived Julian, recovered his liberty, and afterwards quitting his heresy, returned to the general church.

Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, being almost entirely Christian, having destroyed the temple of Fortune since Julian's accession, merited his peculiar hatred;

and he oppressed it with heavy exactions. Julian arriving at Antioch, was mortified to find how the Pagan interest was fallen there. The feast of Apollo was annually celebrated at Daphne, and on that occasion he expected to see the religious magnificence of Antioch displayed before himself as high priest. 'What sacrifice,' said he to the priest, 'is to be offered at the festival?' 'I have brought a goat from home,' replied he, 'but the city has prepared nothing.' 'You, all of you,' addressing himself to the senate, 'suffer every thing to be carried out of our houses, and given to the Galileans by your wives who support the poor with your wealth, and give credit to their impiety.' He uttered more to the same purpose, but he could not communicate his zeal to the senate or people of Antioch. The rage for Hellenism had ceased for ever.

Mark, the bishop of Arethusa, in Syria, being ordered to pay the expense of rebuilding an idolatrous temple, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius, and refusing, from conscientious motives, was tortured in an uncommon manner, and bore his sufferings with such astonishing patience, that the prefect said to Julian, 'Is it not a shame, sir, that the Christians should be so much superior to us, that an old man, over whom victory itself would be inglorious, should conquer us?' He was at length dismissed; and a number, who had persecuted him, attended afterwards to his instructions. The bishop saved the life of Julian in the beginning of the reign of Constantius, when all his family was in danger. His character appears to have been that of candour, piety and virtue; as such he is extolled by Gregory Nazianzen, though he all along supported the Arian party; and contrary to the usual conduct of the Arian from the bible that Gregory does, had he been in its commu-

to recite all the accounts of those who suffered from the insolent cruelty of Pagans, under the politic connivance and partiality of Julian during his short reign.

In the year 362, George, of Alexandria, was murdered by the Pagans of that city, to whom he had made himself obnoxious, by exposing their senseless and ridiculous rites. The providence of God was wonderfully displayed in causing this man, who had distinguished himself as the persecutor of his people, to perish by the hands of idolators at last. There were not wanting, however, those who gave it out, that he had been murdered by the Athanasian party. The letter of Julian to the people of Alexandria, still extant, abundantly confutes this calumny. He blames none but those of his own religion for it, and in his manner of blaming them, he confesses that George deserved even severer punishments, and declares that he will inflict no higher penalty on them than a reprimand, which he hopes they will reverence, 'because from the first origin they were Greek.' Such was the partiality of Julian for Gentiles!

The reader will not have forgotten, that Athanasius was all this time in concealment. He had spent seven years, partly in the deserts, and partly in the house of a virgin at Alexandria. And the steady affection which the people had for him, and which no persecution of enemies could conquer, had under God preserved him from his enemies. This year, after the death of George, he ventured to return openly to his bishopric. The Arians were obliged to hold their meetings in private houses, and the general voice of the people every where sincerely decided for Athanasius. During the little time that he was allowed to appear in public, he acted as a Christian bishop, treating his enemies with mildness, and relieving the distressed without respect of persons, restoring the custom of preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity, removing from the sanctuary those who had made a

traffic of holy things, and gaining the hearts of the people. He held a council at Alexandria, composed of those who had particularly suffered during the Arian persecution, among whom Eusebius of Vercellæ was particularly distinguished. Here those, who, contrary to their settled principles, had been beguiled by Arian subtleties to subscribe what they did not believe, with tears owned how they had been imposed on, and were received into the church. Here the doctrine of the Trinity was again cleared of the ambiguities which had clouded it, and the Nicene creed was allowed to be the most accurate and exact. Two schisms unhappily rent the church at this time. The first was at Antioch, where Euzoius the Arian had the chief sway. The followers of Eustathius, the late orthodox bishop, gave themselves up to Paulinus, a presbyter; while another party looked on themselves as belonging to Meletius, who had lately returned from exile. Lucifer of Cagliari, in his return through the East from banishment in Egypt, stopped at Antioch, with the best intentions, and endeavoured to heal the divisions of the church. But by ordaining Paulinus, he confirmed the evils which he meant to cure. Meletius had a church without the city, Paulinus was allowed one within the city; while Euzoius, the most popular, possessed himself of the rest of the churches, but justice requires us to say, that he used his victory with moderation; and respecting the age, meekness, and piety of Paulinus, he did not deprive him of his little church in the city. A rare instance of moderation in an Arian leader! Lucifer himself was offended, that his fellow-sufferer Eusebius would not approve of his conduct at Antioch, and even broke off communion with him. Finding his obstinacy much blamed in the church, he became a schismatic altogether, returned to his own church at Cagliari in Sardinia, where he died eight years after. His followers were called Luciferians, but they were few in number.

I turn with more pleasure to behold Eusebius of Vercellæ, who came back to his western bishopric in Italy, where he was received with extraordinary joy. His labours, and those of Hilary of Poitiers, were serviceable in Italy, Gaul, and in general through Europe. There the Arian heresy was suppressed, and peace and unity reigned. False learning and philosophy had not so corrupted the understanding. The Donatists in Africa obtained leave of Julian to recover their churches, and that frantic and turbulent sect proceeded to exercise military violence, an evil with which they had always been infected.

Athanasius was not allowed to enjoy long the sweets of liberty. The gentile Alexandrians represented to the emperor, that he corrupted the city and all Egypt, and that if he continued there, not a pagan would be left. Julian's affected moderation was tried to the utmost in this case; and the open spirit of persecution, which, contrary to his deliberate maxims, he displayed on this occasion, does immortal honour to the talents and integrity of the Egyptian prelate. 'I allowed those Galileans,' says he, 'who had been banished, to return to their countries, not to their churches. I order Athanasius to leave the city on the receipt of my letter.' The Christians wrote to the emperor, and begged that he might not be taken from them. Provoked to see how deeply the love of Christianity was fixed in them, and what progress the bishop had made in a very little time, Julian answered them, that since Alexander was their founder, and Serapis and Isis their tutelary gods, it was surprising that the corrupted part should dare to call themselves the community. 'I am ashamed,' says he, 'that the gods should suffer any of you Alexandrians to confess himself a Galilean. You forget your ancient felicity, when Egypt conversed with the gods, and you abounded with prosperity. Your Alexander was a servant of the gods, whom Jupiter raised far above any of these, or the Hebrews,

who were much better. The Ptolemies, who cherished your city as a daughter, advanced it to its greatness, not by preaching Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the execrable Galileans. If you resolve to follow these impostors, agree among yourselves, and desire not to retain Athanasius. Many of his disciples are capable of pleasing you by their impious discourses. But if your affection for him is grounded on his skill and shrewdness (for I hear the man is crafty,) for this reason I expel him from the city. That such an intriguer should preside over the people is dangerous; one who deserves not the name of man, a low despicable creature, who takes a pride in hazarding his life, and is fit only to cause disturbances in society.' To hasten the execution of his order, Julian wrote to the governor of Egypt, that if he did not expel Athanasius by a certain time, a time which he limited, he would fine his officers one hundred pounds of gold. 'I am deeply afflicted,' says he, 'at the contempt of the gods which is shown by this man; it will be highly agreeable to me if you drive the villain out of Egypt, who under my government has had the insolence to baptise Grecian women of quality.

Athanasius was therefore obliged once more to seek safety by flight. All the faithful gathered round him weeping. 'We must retire a little time, friends,' says he, 'it is a cloud that will soon fly over.' He took leave of them, recommending his church to the ablest of his friends, and going on board a vessel, he fled by the Nile into the obscure parts of Egypt.

The active spirit of Julian was now bent on the destruction of the Persian monarchy; and the pains and expense which he made use of in sacrifices and auguries may seem credible. But his ardent mind was one of the fittest instruments of Satanic insatiation, and divine providence was hastening his end. At Antioch he was so provoked by the psalmody of the

Christians, particularly the chorus which they used, 'Confounded be all they that worship graven images,' that he ordered his prætorian prefect, Sallust, to punish them. He, though a Gentile, reluctantly obeyed, and seized a number of Christians. One of them, Theodorus, a young man, was so long and so variously tortured, that his life was despaired of. But God preserved him. Rufinus, the Latin ecclesiastical historian, declares, that he saw him a long time after and asked him, whether he felt any pain in his torments. He replied 'Not much; for a young man stood by him, wiped off his sweat, and encouraged his spirit: so that upon the whole he felt, during his tortures, more pleasure than pain.' A memorable instance of the gracious care of God over his servants! Julian seems to have increased in cruelty as he came nearer to his end. He persecuted numbers at Antioch. Publia, a widow of great reputation, with a number of virgins over whom she presided, sung and praised God, when Julian was passing by. In particular, they sang such parts of the Psalms as expose the wickedness and folly of idolatry. Julian ordered them to hold their peace, till he had passed them. Publia, with more zeal than charity, I fear, encouraged them, and caused them to sing on another occasion as he passed, 'Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered.' Julian in a rage ordered her to be brought before him, and to be buffeted on each side of her face. The effects of passion seem but too visible both in the emperor and the woman: there is, however, this difference; the one had a zeal for God, the other a contempt.

I studiously avoid secular history as much as possible, and having no business with Julian's war against the Persians, I have only to take notice of the circumstances of his death, and to make a reflection or two on the conduct of Divine providence, on the character of the man, and on the lessons of piety

which are obviously imprinted on his story, and on the great deliverance vouchsafed to the church. He received a mortal wound from a Persian lance in a skirmish. We are told that, conscious of his approaching end, he filled his hand with the blood, and casting it into the air said, 'O Galilean, thou hast conquered.' Some think that by that action, he meant to reproach the sun, the idol of the Persians, for his partiality to them, though he himself had been his devout worshipper. It is highly probable, that a soul so active and vehement as his, did express his indignation in some remarkable way at that juncture; neither of the accounts are improbable, though both cannot be true. In his last moments, in his tent, he expressed a readiness to die, declaring that he had learned from philosophy, how much more excellent the soul was than the body, and that death ought rather to be the subject of joy than of affliction. He boasted, that he had lived without guilt, and that he reflected with pleasure on the innocence of his private, and the integrity of his public life. He reproved the immoderate grief of the spectators, and begged them not to disgrace, by their tears, his death, as in a few moments he should mix with heaven and the stars. He entered into a metaphysical argument with Maximus and Priscus, his favourite philosophers, on the nature of the soul. He died after a reign of one year and eight months, in the thirty-second year of his age. A man of good understanding who taught children at Antioch, was in company with Libanius, who asked him what the carpenter's son was doing. It was smartly replied, 'the Maker of the world, whom you jocosely call the carpenter's son, is employed in making a coffin.' A few days after, tidings came to Antioch of Julian's death. The story is related also by authors somewhat differently, but its substance seems to be true: nor is there any occasion to suppose the schoolmaster to have been possessed of the spirit of prophecy.

The minds of Christians in general must have been extremely agitated during this whole scene of Julian's attempt against the Persian empire: their ardent prayers for the preservation of the church, without the least personal ill will to their imperial persecutor, almost implied an expectation of his death in the answer to their prayers; and the extraordinary rashness, with which his military expedition was conducted, might lead mankind in general to hope, or to fear, it would end in his ruin.

VII.—THE CHURCH UNDER JOVIAN.

THIS prince succeeded Julian in the year 363, aged about thirty-three years. His reign was terminated by sudden death, after little more than seven months; nor was there any thing peculiarly shining or eminent in his talents or character. Civil history does not distinguish him. In ecclesiastical history he merits a particular attention; for he is the first of the Roman emperors who gave some clear evidences, though not unequivocal, of real love to the truth as it is in Jesus. It were to be wished that the accounts of this emperor had been more explicit and large. Neither his faith, however, nor his practice seem to contradict what I have asserted; and Providence just showed him to the Roman world, that he might restore the sinking church, and then removed him.

In Julian's time he had given a noble mark of Christian sincerity, by declaring that he would rather quit the service than his religion. Yet Julian kept him near his person, and employed him in his fatal expedition; an unequivocal proof that his talents and capacity, though not of the first rate, were by no means defective. In stature he was much above the common size, and large in proportion, so that it was difficult to find an imperial habit that would suit him. The most striking feature in his character

seems to have been a consistent frankness, openness, and integrity, such as I look for in vain among mere philosophers and mere heroes. Nor can it easily exist, except in minds erected by divine grace above the crooked pursuits of secular ambition. Though the empire of the Roman world was in his eye, he forgot not that he was a Christian, and was solicitous to confess his Saviour at a time when the cause of Paganism must have predominated much in Julian's army. 'I am a Christian,' says he; 'I cannot command idolaters, and I see the wrath of the living God ready to fall on an army of his enemies.' 'You command Christians!' exclaimed those who heard him; the reign of superstition has been too short to efface from our minds the instructions of the great Constantine and of his son Constantius.' Jovian heard with pleasure, and assented, and the Pagans in the army seem to have been silent.

I seem to behold new maxims of government appearing under the first faithful emperor. Though the inhabitants of Nisibis in Mesopotamia petitioned him, with the most vehement importunity, to suffer them to defend their fortress against the Persian king, from their extreme unwillingness to leave their native country, he answered, That he had expressly sworn to deliver up the city, and that he could not elude an oath by vain subtilties. Crowns of gold were usually offered by cities to new princes. The people of Nisibis, willing to remain under the Roman government, very sedulously performed this act of homage. Jovian refused the crown; but they at length, in a manner, compelled him to accept it. Nothing, however, could move him from his purpose. He obliged the inhabitants to depart with their effects, somewhat earlier than he would have done, had he not been exasperated by their insults and importunities. Yet he seems to have done all that circumstances allowed. He ordered Amida,

whither most of them retired, and which had been almost ruined by Sapor, to be rebuilt for their use, and settled them there. Not only Pagan, but some Christian authors reproach Jovian for executing the treaty with so much fidelity. I confess he appears to me highly amiable in those very things for which he has been so much censured. It was an act worthy of a prince who served Jesus Christ, to dread more the loss of truth, and the wrath of God on account of perjury, than the loss of territory. It is difficult for men to divest themselves of the regard for worldly honour and greatness. This illusion gives Jovian a mean appearance in the eyes of most writers. Could such a man be fit to govern an empire? Let it be remembered, however, that if Christian principles place a man under disadvantages in some worldly respects, they compensate for these in others. The same fear of God, which hindered Jovian from breaking his word, would have kept him from entering into a war of such madness and folly, as he found himself involved in at his accession.

These secular transactions would not have engaged my attention, were they not connected with an illustration of the religious principles and conduct of the prince. When I can meet with an exalted personage, who evidences a Christian spirit, I shall think his actions belong properly to this history. But to proceed: at Carrhæ in Mesopotamia, a city wholly Pagan, the messenger, who brought the first news of Julian's death, was near being stoned. Never was Paganism more completely disappointed. Her hopes in an instant vanished as a dream, and the church triumphed in praising her God, who is ever faithful to his promises. Real saints would doubtless show their thankfulness in a becoming manner, and Gregory Nazianzen was particularly careful, in an oration which he published on the occasion, to exhort Christians to display their meekness, humility, and charity. But compassion for a

perishing enemy, and fear at the prospect of prosperity, were not exhibited as they ought to have been. Antioch, in particular, personally hostile to Julian, and filled with Arianism, demonstrated how much it had fallen from Christian purity. Public entertainments, sacred and profane festivals, filled this voluptuous city. Dances and public shows were seen in the churches; and the theatres resounded with insulting acclamations.

Jovian led his army to Antioch, in which he remained six weeks, and applied himself to the regulation of religion. The conduct of his predecessor had involved him in intricate difficulties, both in ecclesiastical affairs and in civil. The whole empire was torn with distractions, and Julian's affected toleration had been attended with the horrors of real persecution. Already, on his death, the temples were every where shut; the priests absconded; the philosophers had quitted the cloak, and resumed their common dress: to so great a despair were the Pagans reduced. Within the church, the orthodox and the Arians were every where at variance; Antioch itself was split into three divisions. The Donatists in Africa exercised a turbulence that required the interference of the magistrate. The Novatians, faulty only in a narrow bigotry and excess of discipline, had kept up some good understanding with the general church, had joined her in the defence of the faith against Arianism, had endured persecution in common with her, while Arianism triumphed; and some of them at Martinium in Paphlagonia had cut in pieces several companies of soldiers, who, under Constantius, had been sent to oblige them to embrace Arianism. But during the reign of Julian, if we except the mad excesses of the Donatists, a kind of truce had prevailed among the contending parties. Immediately on his death, their eyes were solicitously directed to his successor, to see what measures he would pursue. Himself a sincere be-

Never of the primitive faith, he yet abhorred persecution. Convinced that conscience could not be forced, and that a voluntary religion only was acceptable to God, he made a law, by which he permitted the Pagans to re-open their temples, and exercise their religion. Yet he peremptorily forbade witchcraft and impostures. He suffered the public sacrifices, but put a stop to the overflowings of magic and enchantments, with which Julian had filled the empire; in fine, he granted the Pagans more than Constantius had allowed, and placed them in the same state in which they had been left by the great Constantine. In this toleration there was an effective sincerity, to which that of Julian had no just pretensions. In the former reign, the Christian found himself only nominally free; in the latter, the Pagan found himself really so. Philosophers themselves were admitted to court; though it could not be expected that they should become the bosom friends of a Christian emperor. Some of the courtiers insulted them; Jovian himself was too just and generous to do it. Even Libanius and Maximus, the pillars of Paganism and philosophy, were spared; we may thence judge how mildly others were treated. At Constantinople also, sacrifices were publicly offered for the solemnity of the consulship of Jovian. He even permitted Themistius, an illustrious Pagan magistrate, to harangue before him on the propriety of religious freedom, and the rights of conscience, and to thank him for the liberty which he gave to his subjects.

At the same time Jovian declared Christianity to be the established religion, and replaced in the standard the figure of the cross, which Julian had taken away. He ordered the Christians to be restored to their churches, recalled their exiles, and reinstated them in all their privileges. One Magnus, an officer of note, had burned by his private authority the church of Berytus in Phœnicia. He was himself

an unprincipled man, ardent in persecution. Jovian was very near beheading him; but contented himself with obliging him to rebuild the church at his own expense.

Athanasius had no sooner heard of the death of Julian, than he suddenly appeared again at Alexandria, to the agreeable surprise of his people. A letter from Jovian confirmed him in his office, and it was conceived in these terms:—‘To the most religious friend of God, Athanasius. As we admire beyond expression the sanctity of your life, in which shine forth the marks of resemblance to the God of the universe, and your zeal for Jesus Christ our Saviour, we take you, venerable bishop, under our protection. You deserve it, by the courage which you have shown in the most painful labours, and your contempt of persecutors and menacing words. Holding in your hand the helm of faith, which is so dear to you, you cease not to combat for the truth, nor to edify the Christian people, who find in you the perfect model of all virtues. For these reasons we recall you immediately, and we order you to return, to teach the doctrine of salvation. Return to the holy churches; feed the people of God. Let the pastor at the head of the flock offer up prayers for our person, for we are persuaded, that God will diffuse on us and on our fellow Christians his signal favours, if you afford the assistance of your prayers.’

Jovian wrote to him again, to ask instruction with respect to the Arian controversy. Athanasius, entering into his views, convened some bishops, and answered him in the name of the synod, recommending to him the Nicene faith, and defending it in his usual manner. Jovian directed him to come to Antioch, where he was graciously received. Arian and Candidus, two Arians, relations also of the emperor, came to him at Antioch, having conceived some hope of his favour. Euzoius also, the bishop of that city, where Arianism was strong, and some other bish-

laboured to ingratiate themselves with the eunuchs of the palace, as their party had done in the reign of Constantius. The Macedonians too, the followers of the deposed bishop of Constantinople, who had taught them to deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost, solicited the emperor for the predominancy in the church. 'I hate disputes, replied Jovian; I love and honour men of peace, and promoters of union.' The Arians, confounded with such a sentence, communicated with Meletius the orthodox bishop of Antioch, and subscribed the council of Nice. It is difficult to believe their sincerity; under any the most moderate account that can be given of the controversy, Arian duplicity must strike every reader. At any rate Jovian was not to blame; he plainly declared, that he would constrain no man, and he said so sincerely. But power, not mere toleration, was their object. Jovian also strove in vain to heal the divisions between the followers of Meletius and Paulinus, which has been mentioned above.

The Arians of Alexandria attempted to gain the episcopal see for a person named Lucius, a man void of all piety, and made application for him to the emperor, with Lucius himself at their head. The friends of Athanasius sent deputies also on their part, to oppose them. The interference of Constantine, and still more of Constantius, in the expulsion of bishops in cities of great note in the empire, had established an unhappy precedent, which was followed too frequently. A short extract of the conferences may throw some light on the character of Jovian, and on the state of religion at that time. 'We beg your power, your majesty, your piety,' say the Arians, 'to give us audience.' 'Who and whence are you?' 'Sir, we are Christians.' 'Whence, and of what city?' 'Of Alexandria.' 'What do you desire of me?' 'To give us a bishop.' 'I have ordered Athanasius to return to his see.' 'Sir, this man has been banished many years, for crimes of which he is not

cleared.' A soldier of the emperor's guard interposed: 'Sir, give yourself the trouble to examine who these people are, the remains of the faction of George, the villain who desolated Alexandria.' At these words, Jovian, (who was on horseback when they met him,) spurred his horse and left them. The Arians were not so repulsed; they presented themselves to Jovian a second time. 'We have several heads of accusation against Athanasius, which we are able to prove. It is thirty years since he was banished by Constantine and Constantius of immortal memory.' 'The accusations of ten, twenty, thirty years,' replied Jovian, 'are out of date. I know why he was accused, and how he was banished.' A third time Jovian being importuned by the same petitioners, and the deputies of the Athanasians speaking at the same time, Jovian said, 'When all speak together, one cannot understand who is in the right. Choose two persons on both sides; I cannot answer both of you.' The Arians begged the emperor to set over them any person except Athanasius. 'I have made inquiries,' said he; 'he teaches sound doctrine.' 'It is true he speaks well,' answered the Arians, 'but means ill.' The emperor replied, 'I need no other testimony; if he means ill, he must give account of that to God: we men hear words; God alone knows the heart.' 'The treasurer,' said a lawyer, a cynic philosopher, 'has taken some houses from me on account of Athanasius.' 'Is Athanasius responsible for the actions of the treasurer?' 'I have a charge against Athanasius,' said another lawyer, named Patalas, a Pagan. 'What business,' said the emperor, 'has a Pagan like thee to trouble himself about Christians?' Enraged at the attempts of the Arians to corrupt the eunuchs of his court, he made them to undergo the torture, to discover the bottom of the intrigue, and said he would treat his first domestics in the same manner, if they followed such measures. He sent Athanasius to his

diocese, where he lived ten years longer, and directed the affairs of the church.

The plainness and frank manners of Jovian, mixed with firmness, are evident in this account; so is the inveterate malignity of the Arians; and every serious reader will deplore the power which Satan gains over a people once tinged with the spirit of religious party in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, and will see matter of caution not to depart from the simplicity of the gospel.

While Jovian was at Antioch, he was much aspersed by the wits of that city. His person, it was said, was formed at the expense of his mind. The measure of his stature is that of his folly. Calumnies were propagated against him, and the spirit of satire was indulged with much freedom.

But, notwithstanding these censures, the acknowledgments of pagans themselves in favour of Jovian; his talent of knowing men, and employing them accordingly; his attention to find out persons of merit; his care of Christian doctrine and piety; his integrity and openness; and above all, his strict conscientiousness, like to which I find nothing in pagan heroes and patriots; announced, though not the splendid genius, yet the man of sound understanding, and promised to the world a wise and pious government. It is impossible that Ammianus could have had a mean opinion of him, since, when he speaks of his faults, he owns that he might have lived to correct them. He seems to have been a character of the solid, not the shining kind; the wickedness of the times, I fear was unworthy of him. He was soon removed, and so very suddenly, that it was suspected he had not died a natural death; though of this no proof was given. The Christians sincerely wept, the Pagans in general spake well of him; the Arians soon endeavoured to take advantage of his decease, and the church was once more involved in persecution.

VIII.—THE CHURCH UNDER VALENS

JOVIAN was succeeded by two brothers, Valentinian and Valens; the former governed in the West, the latter in the East. Valentinian followed the plan of Jovian, in the affairs of the church. Valens, a man of weak capacity himself, had not been yet baptized, and seemed as little qualified to judge of matters of religion as of government. Valentinian, whom fraternal affection induced to make him his colleague in the empire, had been in vain advised to choose another person. The Arians, who, under Eudoxius bishop of Constantinople, had ruled the capital in all ecclesiastical affairs, in the time of Constantius, rejoiced to find Valens equally supple and ductile as that emperor. Even the party of Macedonius, a sort of semi-Arians, who allowed the Son of God to be like the Father, though not of the same substance, and who were likewise enemies to the divinity of the Holy Ghost, could not gain the favour of the emperor, but were persecuted as well as the orthodox; while Eudoxius with the complete Arians, who would not allow the similarity of the Son to the Father, engrossed all the churches. The semi-Arians, induced by these circumstances, entered into connexion with Liberius, bishop of Rome and reunited themselves with the orthodox churches of the West: yet one can have no great idea of the sincerity of this sect, as they would have probably persisted in their heresy, if Valens had favoured their notion; many of them, however, might be perverted by the subtleties of disputation, and be more orthodox in their hearts than in their expressions. Valens ordered all the followers of the Nicene faith to be expelled from Constantinople. In this persecution were included the Novatians: their churches were ordered to be shut up, as well as their persons to be banished; for the orthodox of the young

church had no places of worship from the days of Constantius; and Jovian their friend had not lived to come to his capital. One Agelius, the Novatian bishop, was exiled, a man of admirable sanctity and virtue, and remarkable for his perfect contempt of money. Yet was he restored not long after, and he recovered the churches of his communion. He owed this, under Providence, to one Marcian, a man of learning and piety, a Novatian presbyter, who educated two daughters of the emperor. On this account the Novatians were at length tolerated; while the general church suffered the rigour of banishment, and was silent by compulsion, and while the Arians tyrannized over all the Christian world in the East. Yet the Novatians were still infested by the Arians, because they cherished and loved in a tender manner their brethren of the general church.

We must once more see Athanasius attacked by the enemies of Christian piety. About the beginning of the year 367, Valens, at the solicitation of Eudoxius, ordered the bishops who had been deposed in the reign of Constantius, and were afterwards restored, to be expelled from their churches. By virtue of this order, Tatian, governor of Alexandria, attempted to drive Athanasius out of that city. The prelate had the hearts of his people. Long experience of his integrity and virtue, respect for his talents, and compassion for his sufferings had secured him this the most reasonable and the most glorious of all empires. The prefect was so sensible of this, that for some time he dared not proceed to execute his orders. At length, he brake one night with an armed force into his church, where he generally lodged, and sought for his person in every place, but in vain. Athanasius, probably warned beforehand of the danger, had retired, and remained for four months concealed in his father's sepulchre. This was the fourth time that he had fled from Alexandria. Valens, however, from the dread he

seems to have had of the people, ordered him to be recalled; nor could Lucius, the Arian bishop of Alexandria, prevail on him to give Athanasius any more disturbance. About this time Valens himself received baptism from Eudoxius, who had such an ascendant over the weak emperor, as to induce him to swear that he would never depart from the Arian creed.

A council was held at Laodicea in Phrygia about this time. A few of its canons shall be mentioned, as they will throw some light on the spirit of religion. One of them prohibits the ordination of men lately baptized; and so far agrees with the sacred rule. The choice of those appointed to the priesthood was not to be left to the people, but the bishops were to be chosen by the metropolitans, after a long probation of their faith and morals. In this, an alteration was doubtless made from the customs, which had obtained before the time of Constantine, and the metropolitans now exercised the same power which the apostles had done, who doubtless ordained pastors in all the churches by their own authority. The council orders clergymen not to lend money upon usury, nor to visit taverns and houses of entertainment, nor to assist at the public shows exhibited at marriages and festivals. A proof, I fear, that their manners were grown more lax and dissolute. The invocation of angels is also solemnly forbidden, a proof that this species of idolatry had already crept into the church, and a condemnation of the practice of the Romanists. Presbyters are forbidden also to practise magic and enchantment: pity, that there should be occasion to make such a canon! On the whole, this council, though it appears seriously bent on the support of good discipline and manners, evidences a great and deep corruption to have taken place in the church of Christ.

Valens himself, being at Tomi, a city of Scythia, near the mouth of the Danube, ordered Brettannio

the bishop to meet and communicate with him and his Arian attendants, who came to the bishop's church for that purpose. Brettannio firmly refused, professing his regard for the Nicene faith, and, leaving the emperor, he went to another church, and all his congregation followed him. Valens with his attendants being left alone, was so enraged, that he ordered the bishop to be banished, though political reasons induced him soon after to permit his return. The Scythians were indignant at the banishment of their bishop, a man renowned among them for piety and integrity, and Valens dreaded their revolt. Of the conduct of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen in these times, it will be more proper to speak in the course of their story, as they are men who deserve to be held out to the more distinct attention of the reader. Antioch was sorely shaken with the conflicts of this persecution. There Arianism triumphed, both in numbers and in power, though the influence of the two orthodox bishops, Meletius and Paulinus, under God, preserved a considerable remnant. For wherever men of firm piety ruled in the churches, they were enabled to check the torrent. On the death of Eudoxius in 370, the Arians chose Demophilus in his room, and Valens approved of the election. The orthodox elected at the same time Evagrius bishop of Constantinople. Valens, incensed, banished both him and the bishop who had dared to ordain him.

On this occasion eighty ecclesiastics were sent to the emperor at Nicomedia, to complain of his conduct. Enraged at their presumption, and yet afraid of a sedition, he gave private orders to Modestus, his prefect, to murder them secretly. The execution of this order deserves to be known in all ages. The prefect pretended that he would send them into banishment, with which they cheerfully acquiesced. But he directed the mariners to set the ship on fire as soon as they were gone to sea. The mariners did

so, and going into a boat which followed them, escaped. The burning vessel was driven by a strong west wind into the haven of Dacidizus, on the coast of Bithynia, where it was consumed with the ministers. The intention of concealing what was done, was frustrated; and the wickedness and inhumanity of the murder appeared more odious, by the meanness with which it was contrived.

Cæsarius, the brother of Gregory Nazianzen, had been recalled to court by Jovian, and Valens made him questor of Bithynia. His brother exhorted him to disengage himself from the world, which at length he did, and died soon after.

Athanasius had the courage to expel from the church the governor of Lybia, a man wholly given up to cruelty and debauchery: nor was the world then so degenerate, as to despise altogether the discipline of the church. A council held at Antioch by the faithful, consisting of a hundred and forty-six bishops, pathetically bewailed the times: and among other things, they observed, that the infidels laughed at these evils, and staggered the weak, while true Christians avoiding the churches, as being now nurseries of impiety, went into deserts, and lifted up their hands to God with sighs and tears.

Meletius, who was the chief of this council, was banished the third time, and sent into Armenia, his own country. The other bishop, Paulinus, whose flock was small, was spared. The Meletians, deprived of their churches, assembled at the foot of a mountain near Antioch, and heard the word of God. But from this place also they were driven, and many of them were thrown into the Orontes.

Maximus, the philosopher and friend of Julian, was at length made a victim to the jealousy of Valens, for some magical contrivances real or pretended.

At Edessa, the orthodox were wont to meet in a field; Valens ordered them to be dispersed; but the

resolution of a woman who hastened thither as on purpose to suffer martyrdom, staggered his mind, and caused him to cease from the attempt.

Another method was taken: the pastors of Edessa were sent into banishment; some of them were conducted to Antinous, where observing the greater part of the inhabitants to be Pagans, they employed themselves in taking pains for their eternal salvation. Protogenes particularly taught the children to write and to read the Psalms of David and suitable passages of the New Testament; and though the account we have here is very defective, there is reason to believe, that the progress of the Gospel was increased by these means.

Athanasius died in the year 373, after he had been bishop forty-six years; and being desired to nominate a successor, he mentioned Peter, an aged saint, and the faithful companion of his labours. Let us pause a little, to view the writings and character of this great man.

A person so actively employed, and so wholly taken up during the course of a long life with a single controversy, is not likely to leave behind him writings very instructive to after ages. I run through his works, and find nothing important in them, except what relates to the Arian controversy. As a writer, he is nervous, clear, argumentative, and every where discovers the man of sense, except in the *Life of Anthony the monk*, and other monastic pieces, the superstitions and follies of which unhappy perversion of piety, received but too liberal support from his influence. But such were the times; and in public life, the abuses of Christianity were so many, that I wonder not that the most godly had the strongest relish for monasticism, in an age when the knowledge of the genius of the Gospel was so much darkened. Redemption by the cross he speaks of in a manner perfectly scriptural; but little is to be found in him of the experience of these doctrines, and their appli-

years, had been in subjection to Arian impiety and tyranny. By this time few remained in this great city, who knew any thing scriptural; truth and godliness had fled; the times were, however, now favourable for the recovery of the profession of the gospel, and Gregory of Nazianzum was appointed for this purpose. He found the city in a state little removed from heathenism.

In the year 380, Theodosius, desirous of co-operating with Gregory and other zealous pastors in the revival of Christianity in the East, published a law by which he reprobated the heresy of Arianism. He gave notice to Demophilus, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, to embrace the Nicene faith, and unite the people, and to live in peace. Demophilus, rejecting his proposal, the emperor ordered him to give up the churches. 'If they persecute us in one city,' said the heresiarch to the people of his communion, 'our Master orders us to flee to another. To-morrow, therefore, I purpose to hold our assembly without the city.' He found, however, little encouragement to proceed, and afterwards retired to Berea, where he died six years after. Thus within forty years from the time that Eusebius of Nicomedia was violently intruded into Constantinople, the room of Paul, the sacred places were restored to the church of Christ. For so I shall venture to call the Trinitarians, however low and reduced the spirit of godliness was, especially in the east; not because they held the doctrine of truth, but because whatever of the true spirit of the gospel was found any where, rested with them. If the reader recollects the barbarities exercised on Paul, and the conduct of the Arians, while in power, he will be struck with the difference between Theodosius and Gregory on one side, and Constantius and Eusebius on the other. I am far from undertaking to revise all the proceedings of the patrons of the

Arianism, supported by the civil powers, triumphed without controul. Nineteen priests and deacons, some very old, were seized by Magnus. 'Agree, wretches,' said the pagan, 'to the sentiments of the Arians. If your religion be true, God will forgive you for yielding to necessity.' 'Forbear to importune us,' they replied, 'we do not believe that God is sometimes Father, and sometimes not. Our fathers at Nice confessed, that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.' Whips and tortures, the grief of the godly, and the insults of Jews and apostates, altered not their determination: they were banished to Heliopolis in Phœnicia. Palladius, a pagan, the governor of Egypt, sent many to prison, who had presumed to weep; and after he had scourged them, sent twenty-three of them, chiefly monks, to work in the mines. Other scenes of savage cruelty are related, it is tedious and unpleasant to enlarge on them: but it is a pleasure to behold the fruits of Athanasius's labours in the faithful sufferings of so many of his followers. Euzoius, having put Lucius and his Arians into the possession of the churches, and left Alexandria in tears, returned to Antioch. What a bishop was this! But the Christian reader will steadily observe with me, that Christ had all along a real church, and that the cross is her mark, but the cross meekly endured: and were not Euzoius's conduct connected with this truth, his name would deserve no notice in this history.

The monks of Egypt, whose piety moved the common people, were courted by the Arian party; but they offered their necks to the sword, rather than quit the Nicene profession. A number of these were banished, but were afterwards permitted to return. Peter himself, though imprisoned, found means to escape, and in Europe, where Arianism had no power, he enjoyed a quiet exile.

The piety of Terentius, an officer of Valens, deserves to be recorded. The emperor, pleased with

his services, bade him ask a favour. The man begged the liberty of a place of worship for the orthodox. Valens in a rage tore his petition. Terentius gathering the fragments of the petition, said, I have received a gift from you, O Emperor. Let the judge of all the earth judge between us.

At the same time among the Goths, by the cruelty of their king Athanaric, numbers of godly men were murdered for the sake of their Redeemer. Eusebius of Samosata was expelled by the Arian tyranny from his see. He took particular care to preserve the life of the imperial messenger before his departure, and when desired, with floods of tears by his flock, not to leave them to the mercy of the wolves, he read to them that passage of the apostle, which commands obedience to the powers that be. Excellent servant of Christ!

Eusebius of Samosata is one of those bishops of whom it were to be wished we had a more distinct account. His zeal had exposed him to this persecution. In the disguise of a soldier he had travelled through various parts of the east, to confirm the desolate churches, and to supply them with pastors. When the messenger of his banishment came to him, 'Conceal the occasion of your journey,' says he, 'or you will be thrown into the river, and your death laid to my charge.' He himself retired with great secrecy, yet was he followed by the people. The testimony he gave of the primitive duty of passiveness under injuries was much needed in these times when men had too much forgotten to suffer with meekness. He received from his friends very little for his journey, though their liberality would have supplied him abundantly. He prayed, and instructed the people, and then retired in peace.

It will be proper to finish here all that I can find concerning Eusebius which is material. In the time of Constantius he had been intrusted with the care of a decree of a council held at Antioch, which the

Arian party afterwards persuaded Constantius to order him to deliver up. He justly observed, that what had been delivered by a synod, could only be returned by the authority of the same synod. Even a menace, that he should have his hand cut off, prevailed not with him. Constantius admired his fortitude, and desisted. No wonder that the people of Samosata, after his exile under Valens, admiring a man so firm and sincere, refused to attend the religious instructions of the successor who was forced upon them; who being a man of a meek temper, took much pains to ingratiate himself with them, but in vain. Eunomius (that was his name) left them, because he could not gain their favour. The Arians put in his room one Lucius, who acted with more violence, and encouraged the secular power to persecute. Eusebius, however, lived long enough to recover his see of Samosata after the death of Valens, and was at last killed with a tile by a zealous Arian woman in the town of Dolicha, whither he was come to ordain an orthodox pastor, the place being very hostile to the doctrine of the Trinity. He died in a very charitable spirit, insisting with his friends, that the woman should not be brought to justice on his account, and obliged them to swear that they would gratify him in this.

Some further views of the church under Valens will appear in the lives of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, whom I studiously pass over for the present. Valens perished in a battle with the Goths in the year 378, after having reigned fourteen years.

Valens, however, from whatever cause, a little before his death, recalled the exiled bishops. Lucius was driven from Alexandria; Peter recovered his see, and Arianism lost its external dominion a little before the death of its benefactor.

The Goths, who had settled on the Roman side of the Danube, in the dominions of Valens, were, by

the advice of Eudoxius, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, brought over to Arianism. Valens proposed that they should agree with him in doctrine; but they declared, that they never would recede from the doctrine of their ancestors. Ulfila, the bishop of the whole nation, of whom more hereafter, was induced, by the presents and complaisance of Eudoxius, to attempt to draw them over to the emperor's doctrine; and his argument, which I suppose he had from Eudoxius, was, that it was only a verbal dispute. Hence the Gothic Christians continued to assert, that the Father was greater than the Son, but would not allow the Son to be a creature. Nor yet did they wholly depart from the faith of their ancestors. For Ulfila assured them, that there was no difference of doctrine at all, but that the rupture had arisen from a vain contention.

IX.—THE CHURCH UNDER VALENTINIAN AND GRATIAN

LET us turn our eyes to a more cheerful prospect in the West; in the East, the only comfortable circumstance has been, that God left not himself without witness, but marked his real church by a number of faithful sufferers. Valentinian, the elder brother of Valens, made a law in the beginning of his reign, that no man should be compelled in religion. He restrained, however this general licence soon after, partly by seizing the revenues of the heathen temples, which the emperors annexed to their own patrimony, and partly by the prohibition of divinations and enchantments. On a representation of the governor of Greece, Achaia was allowed still to practise her heathenish follies. Other laws in favour of Christians followed. One of the supposed oracles of Greece had declared that Christianity should last only 600 years in the world. This period was now expired, and the event had falsified the prediction. In other instances this emperor was very indulgent to the

Pagans, who might see themselves, both in the east and west, treated with far more lenity and favour than the church of Christ was in the east during the whole reign of the two brothers. Themistius, the pagan philosopher, was struck with the cruelty of Valens; and while he insinuated that perhaps God was delighted with the diversity of sentiments in the world concerning him, he entreated the emperor not to persecute any longer. This is one instance of the illegitimate charity now so common in the world, which founds the principles of moderation on scepticism, instead of that divine love which is the glory of the Christian religion.

Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan, being opposed by Eusebius of Vercellæ, and by Hilary of Poitiers, imposed on Valentinian by a dexterous use of those ambiguities of speech, in which the Arians all along excelled. Nor is it to be wondered at, that Valentinian should be deceived, since even to this day the patrons of Arianism, by largely dwelling on the perfections of the Son of God, with a cautious omission of the term consubstantial, in a similar way frequently prevail on many, who do not or will not understand the true grounds of the controversy, to suppose that the difference of opinion is merely verbal. Hilary contended, that if this were really the case, the Arians could have no reason to avoid an explicit acknowledgment of the whole truth. To this it may justly be added, that their constant support of those who were undoubted opposers of the divinity of Jesus, and their constant enmity against its explicit defenders, evince the difference to be real, not imaginary; and so it will be felt by every one who feels the worth of his soul, and is forced to see the difference between committing its salvation to the Creator and the creature. With equal justice Hilary complained of the Arian method of supporting their creed by military and imperial power. But he complained in vain; the duplicity

of Auxentius prevailed, and he was suffered to continue at Milan in the practice of undermining the faith, without openly attacking it; the constant method of heresy in all ages. Whereas divine truth speaks directly and plainly, and must do so, whatever be the consequence. And in this sincerity the church must continue to the end, supported not by political arts, but by divine influence. In the year 366, died Liberius of Rome. How far he really recovered from his fall under Constantius, is not very apparent. He was succeeded by Damasus, who however was not established in his see without a contest with Ursinus, which cost a number of lives. So much were Christian bishops degenerated. But it should be observed, that there was a material difference in these times between pastors of great cities and those of smaller. What I mean, is well illustrated by Ammianus. 'When I consider,' says he, 'the magnificence and grandeur of Rome, I do not deny, but that those who are ambitious of this dignity, ought to use all their endeavours to arrive at it; since they by this means procure a certain settlement, where they are enriched by the offerings of the ladies: they ride in chariots, richly clothed; and feast so splendidly, that their tables surpass even those of kings. They might be truly happy, if, contemning the splendour of Rome, they lived like some bishops of the provinces, who by the plainness of their diet, their mean apparel, and the modesty of their looks, which are turned towards the ground, make themselves acceptable to the eternal God and his true worshippers.'

Thus far this sensible and candid Pagan, who by the concluding part of the passage appears to have imbibed some Christian notions, and to support that mongrel character, which I have elsewhere attributed to him. While we lament how full history is of these splendid and opulent bishops, and how scanty our materials are concerning the humble and obscure

ones, it behoves us to be on our guard against the malignant intimations of profane historians, who represent the church in these times as altogether corrupt. It was very much so at Rome, at Antioch, at Constantinople, and other large cities, especially among the great and the rich. In the story of these, we see continually what an enemy riches are to the divine life. But among the lower orders, and in obscure places, by the confession of Ammianus, upright and exemplary pastors were not wanting; and if we had an historical view of their labours and success, I doubt not but the Church of Christ, even in the fourth century, would be seen with other eyes than it is by many.

I am endeavouring to catch the features of this church, wherever I can find them in this obscure region. I have distinguished formerly three species of dissenters; the Novatians, the Meletians and the Donatists. The first are by far the most respectable: of the second little is known, and that little is not to their credit: the third are flagitious, by the confession of all writers. A fourth appears, the Luciferians, who, if they imbibed the spirit of Lucifer, must have been firm and sincere in the love of the truth. In the year 374, the emperor ordered all who held unlawful assemblies to be banished an hundred miles from Rome. In prosecution of this edict, Damasus seems to have caused a Luciferian presbyter to be apprehended, who held a congregation by night in a private house; and he and some of the same class were banished. Notwithstanding this severity, Damasus could not prevent these dissenters from having a bishop of their own at Rome, called Aurelius, who was succeeded by Ephesus, who also kept his station at Rome, notwithstanding the endeavours of Damasus to remove him. Gregory of Elvira in Spain was another of their bishops, a man whose firmness was extolled by Eusebius of Vercellæ. The Donatists had likewise a bishop at Rome, and ano-

political arts, but by divine inducement. In 366, died Liberius of Rome. How far recovered from his fall under Constantine is very apparent. He was succeeded by Damasus, however was not established in his see in contest with Ursinus, which cost a number of lives. So much were Christian bishops degenerated, it should be observed, that there was a difference in these times between pastors of great cities and those of smaller. What I mean is illustrated by Ammianus. 'When I consider the magnificence and grandeur of the Roman Empire, I cannot deny, but that those who are ambitious of high dignity, ought to use all their endeavours to attain it; since they by this means procure a great settlement, where they are enriched by the gifts of the ladies: they ride in chariots, richly furnished, and feast so splendidly, that their tables surpass those of kings. They might be truly happy, in testifying the splendour of Rome, they lived in luxury. The bishops of the provinces, who by the plainness of their diet, their mean apparel, and the modesty of their looks, which are turned towards the

ones, it behoves us to be on our guard against the malignant intimations of profane historians, who represent the church in these times as altogether corrupt. It was very much so at Rome, at Antioch, at Constantinople, and other large cities, especially among the great and the rich. In the story of these, we see continually what an enemy riches are to the divine life. But among the lower orders, and in obscure places, by the confession of Ambrianus, upright and exemplary pastors were not wanting; and if we had an historical view of their labours and success, I doubt not but the Church of Christ, even in the fourth century, would be seen with other eyes than it is by many.

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his escape, and hid himself in the country-house of a friend. A menacing edict of the emperor brought him again to Milan, where he yielded at length, and Valentinian gave thanks to God and our Saviour, that it had pleased him to make choice of the very person to take care of men's souls, whom he had himself before appointed to preside over their temporal concerns. Valentinian received his general admonitions with reverence; and hearing him represent the faults of some in authority with great plainness: 'I knew,' said the emperor, 'the honesty of your character before this time, yet I consented to your ordination; follow the divine rules, and cure the maladies into which we are prone to fall.'

Ambrose was then about thirty-six years old. Immediately he gave to the church and to the poor all the gold and silver which he had. He gave also his lands to the church, reserving the present income of them for the use of his sister Marcellina. His family he committed to the care of his brother Satyrus. Thus disengaged from temporal concerns, he gave up himself wholly to the ministry. Having read little else than profane authors, he first applied himself to the study of the Scriptures. Whatever time he could spare from business, he devoted to reading; and this he continued to do after he had attained a good degree of knowledge. I wish Origen had been less the object of his study. But the renown of that Father was great, and this was not an age of evangelical perspicuity. His public labours went hand in hand with his studies. He preached every Lord's day. Arianism by his labours was expelled from Italy.

There was a presbyter of Rome, named Simplician, a man of eminent learning and piety, whom he drew over to Milan, and under whose tuition he improved in theology. For his knowledge must have been very confined when he entered upon his office, and what is very rare, he knew it to be so. Simplician he ever loved and revered. We shall hear again

of this presbyter, when we come to the conversion of Augustine. It pleased God to make him a useful instrument for the instruction of both these luminaries of the Western church, and as he out-lived Ambrose, though very old, he was appointed his successor in the church of Milan. From Simplician, as an instrument, it pleased God successively to convey both to Ambrose and to Augustine that fire of divine love and genuine simplicity in religion, which had very much decayed since the days of Cyprian: and in this slow, but effectual method, the Lord was preparing the way for another great effusion of his Spirit. Ambrose now gave himself wholly to the work of the Lord, and restored purity of doctrine and discipline.

Valentinian died in the year 375, after a reign of eleven years; survived by his brother Valens about three years. Violent anger had ever been his predominant evil, and a fit of passion at length cost him his life. Of some men we must say with the Apostle, that their sins follow after, while others evidence in this life what they are. Of the former dubious sort seems to have been the emperor Valentinian. Fierce and savage by nature, though of excellent understanding, and, when cool, of the soundest judgment, we have seen him modestly submitting himself to the judgment of bishops in divine things, and also zealous in religion, so far as his knowledge would permit, which seems to have been very small. We are astonished to behold the imperious lion turned into a gentle lamb; and the best use to be made of his character is, to prove how extremely beneficial it is to human society, that princes should be men of some religion. Without this check, Valentinian might have been one of the worst of tyrants; but by the sole means of religion he passes for one of the better sort of princes.

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an infant, succeeded in Italy, and the rest of the Western world. And some time after Gratian chose Theodosius as his colleague, who reigned in the East.

From his early years there appeared unquestionable marks of real godliness in Gratian, to a degree beyond any thing that has yet been seen in any Roman emperor. One of his first actions demonstrated it. The title of high-priest always belonged to the Roman Princes. He justly observed, that as his whole nature was idolatrous, it became not a Christian to assume it. He therefore refused the title, though the Pagans still gave him the title.

As he was destitute of that ambition which Roman pride had ever indulged, he chose a colleague for the East, of great abilities, purely for the good of the states, and managed the concerns of his infant brother at Rome with the affection of a father. Then, from the beginning of his reign, Gracchus the prefect, as yet only a catechumen, laboured earnestly to subdue idolatry. The mind of this young prince being strongly fixed on divine things, and being conscious of ignorance, he wrote to Ambrose of Milan to beseech his personal instructions in religion. Some writings of Ambrose remain to us as the consequence of Gratian's request.

The errors of good men have in some instances proved prejudicial to the church. This was happily the case with Ambrose. All the world bore testimony to his sincerity, charity, and piety: but he had not strength to withstand the torrent of superstition, which for some time had been growing. It even augmented it by his immoderate encomiums on virginity. The little acquaintance he had with the scriptures before his ordination, and the influence of his sister Marcellina, a zealous devotee, were account for this. He wrote treatises on the subject, he reduced the rules of it to a sort of system, and exposed himself to the ill-will of parents, by producing a considerable number of young women

follow them. It must be confessed, however, that he taught the essentials of Christian faith and love, and built his wood, hay, and stubble, on the true foundation. He had no other arms but those of persuasion, and his great success showed the piety, as well as superstition of many of the female sex.

Another part of his conduct was more worthy of his understanding. The ravages of the Goths gave him an opportunity to exercise his liberality. He scrupled not to apply the vessels of the church to the redemption of captives, and vindicated himself against those who censured his conduct. In the instruction of catechumens, he employed so much pains, that five bishops could scarcely go through so much labour as he alone. At Sirmium in Illyricum, the Arian bishop Photinus had caused a wide departure from the faith: and there being a vacancy in the year 379, Ambrose was sent for to attend the election of a new bishop. The Empress Justina, mother of young Valentinian, resided there at that time. She had conceived a predilection for Arianism, and endeavoured, by her authority and influence, to expel Ambrose from the church. He continued, however, in his tribunal, though insulted and harassed by the mob. An Arian woman, particularly, had the impudence to lay hold of his habit, and attempt to draw him among the women, who intended to drag him out of the church. 'Though I am unworthy of the priesthood,' said he 'it does not become you to lay hands on a pastor; you ought to fear the judgment of God.' It is remarkable, that she died the next day. The minds of men were struck with awe, and Artemius, an orthodox minister, was elected without molestation. But the foundation was here laid for the enmity of Justina, which afterwards broke out against Ambrose in a remarkable manner. At Antioch, Meletius was now restored, and the churches which had long been afflicted, recovered breath. Constantinople, for forty

years, had been in subjection to Arian impiety and tyranny. By this time few remained in this city, who knew any thing scriptural, truth and piety had fled; the times were, however, somewhat favourable for the recovery of the profession of the gospel, and Gregory of Nazianzum was appointed for this purpose. He found the city in a state far removed from heathenism.

In the year 380, Theodosius, desirous of co-operating with Gregory and other zealous pastors in the revival of Christianity in the East, published a law by which he reprobated the heresy of Arianism, and expressed his warm approbation of the Nicene faith. He gave notice to Demophilus, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, to embrace the Nicene creed, and to unite the people, and to live in peace. Demophilus rejecting his proposal, the emperor ordered him to give up the churches. 'If they persecute us in this city,' said the heresiarch to the people of his communion, 'our Master orders us to flee to another.' To-morrow, therefore, I purpose to hold our assemblies without the city.' He found, however, no encouragement to proceed, and afterwards retired to Berea, where he died six years after. Thus, forty years from the time that Eusebius of Caesarea was violently intruded into Constantinople, the room of Paul, the sacred places were restored to the church of Christ. For so I shall venture to call the Trinitarians, however low and reduced their degree of godliness was, especially in the east; not because they held the doctrine of truth, but because whatever of the true spirit of the gospel was left anywhere, rested with them. If the reader recollects the barbarities exercised on Paul, and the unchristian conduct of the Anians, while in power, he will be struck with the difference between Theodosius and Gregory on one side, and Constantius and Eusebius on the other. I am far from undertaking to narrate all the proceedings of the patrons of the Nicene faith.

faith; but undoubtedly their conduct was full of meekness, compared with that of their opponents.

Gregory being now confirmed in the see of Constantinople, the emperor called a council in that city, A. D. 381, to settle the distracted state of the eastern church. There came hither three hundred and fifty bishops. But it was found much easier to expel Arianism and corruption externally than internally. The council was very confused and disorderly, greatly inferior in piety and wisdom to that of Nice, though it be called the second general council. One of the holiest men there was Meletius of Antioch, who died at Constantinople. Gregory justly observed, that as Paulinus was sound in the faith, and of unexceptionable character, there could now be no reason why the unhappy breach, so long continued in that church, should not at once be healed by confirming him in the succession. But faction was high, and charity was low at this time; he was overruled by the immoderate; and Flavian was constituted the successor of Meletius, as if they took pleasure in lengthening the reign of schism a little; for Paulinus was far advanced in years. In this affair, the younger bishops had influenced the elder, though they could assign no better reason than that, finding the bishops of the west ready to support Gregory's opinion, they thought those of the east ought to prevail, because Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, had appeared in Asia, not in Europe. So easy is it in the decline of piety for Christian formalities to be preserved, while human depravity reigns in the temper and spirit. Gregory, in disgust, soon after gave up his see.

This council very accurately defined the doctrine of the Trinity, and enlarging a little the Nicene creed, they delivered it, as we now have it in our Communion Service. The Macedonian heresy, which blasphemed the Holy Ghost, gave occasion to a more explicit representation of the third Person in the

years, had been in subjection to Arian impiety and tyranny. By this time few remained in this great city, who knew any thing scriptural; truth and godliness had fled; the times were, however, more favourable for the recovery of the profession of the gospel, and Gregory of Nazianzum was appointed for this purpose. He found the city in a state little removed from heathenism.

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coming to court with other bishops, paid the usual respects to the emperor, but took no notice of his son Arcadius, about six years old, who was near the father. Theodosius bade him salute his son. Amphilochus drew near, and stroking him, said, "God save you, my child." The emperor in anger ordered the old man to be driven from court; who with a loud voice declared, You cannot bear to have your son contemned; be assured, that God in like manner is offended with those who honour not his Son as himself. The emperor was struck with the justness of the remark, and immediately made a law to prohibit the assemblies of the heretics.

In the same year, the emperor Gratian lost his life by the rebellion of Maximus, who commanded in Britain. Deserted by his troops, Gratian fled towards Italy. He found the usual lot of the calamitous, a perfect want of friends; yet he might have escaped to the court of Milan, where his younger brother, Valentinian, reigned, if he had not been betrayed at Lyons. Adragathius invited him to a feast, and swore to him upon the gospel. The sincere mind of Gratian, measuring others by himself, and as yet not knowing the world (for he was but twenty-four years of age) fell into the snare, and his murder was the consequence. All writers agree, that he was of the best disposition, and well skilled both in religious and secular learning. Ambrose had a peculiar affection for him, and on his account wrote a treatise concerning the Deity of the Holy Ghost. He tells us (and every thing that we know of him confirms the account) that he was godly from his tender years. Chaste, temperate, benevolent, conscientious, he shines in the church of Christ; but talents for government he seems not to have possessed, and his indolence gave advantage to those who abused both himself and the public. Divine Providence in him hath given us a lesson, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; even a prince

unquestionably pious is denied the common advantage of a natural death. When he was dying, he bemoaned the absence of Ambrose, and often spoke of him. Those who have received benefit from a pastor in divine things, have often an affection for him of which the world has no idea. The last movements of a saint are absorbed in divine things, compared with which, the loss of empire weighed as nothing in the mind of Gratian.

Justina the empress was a decided patroness of Arianism. After the death of her husband, she began openly to pervert her son with her doctrine, and to induce him to menace the bishop of Milan. Ambrose exhorted him to support the doctrine received from the apostles. Young Valentinian, in a rage, ordered his guards to surround the church, and commanded Ambrose to come out of it. 'I shall not willingly,' replied the bishop, 'give up the sheep of Christ to be devoured by wolves. You may use your swords and spears against me; such a death shall freely undergo.' After this he was exposed to the various artifices of Justina, who feared to attack him openly. For the people were generally inclined to support the bishop; and his residence in the city where the court was held, at once increased his influence, and exercised his mind with a series of trials.

The Arians were not now the only adversaries of the church; the pagans themselves, taking advantage of the minority of Valentinian and the convulsions of the empire, endeavoured to recover their ancient establishment. The senate of Rome consisted still very much of Gentiles; and the pride of family grandeur still induced the most noble to pique themselves on their constancy, and to reject the innovations of Christianity. Symmachus, a man of learning and great powers of eloquence, headed the party, and endeavoured to persuade the emperor to suffer the altar of Victory to be restored to the senate-house. Ambrose wrote to Valentinian, but

it ill became the Gentiles to complain of their losses, who never spared the blood of Christians, and who refused them, under Julian, the common liberty of teaching. 'If he is a pagan who gives you this advice, let him give the same liberty which he takes himself. You compel no man to worship what he does not approve. Here the whole senate, so far as it is Christian, is endangered. Every senator takes his oath at the altar; every person who is obliged to appear before the senate upon oath, takes his oath in the same manner. The divinity of the false gods is evidently allowed by the practice. And Christians are obliged by these means to endure a persecution. But in matters of religion consult with God; and whatever men may say of injuries which they suffer, remember that you injure no man by preferring God Almighty before him.' We have still extant the address of Symmachus to the emperors on the subject; in vindication of pagan idolatry, in which he introduces Rome as a person complaining of the hardships to which she was exposed in her old age. We have also the reply of Ambrose, who introduces Rome observing, that it was not by the favour of these gods, that she gained her victories. In answer to the complaint which the pagans made of the loss of their revenues, he observes, that the gospel had increased by poverty and ill-treatment, whereas riches and prosperity seemed necessary to the very existence of their religion. And now that the church has some wealth, he justly glories in the use she made of it, and challenges the pagans to declare, what captives they had redeemed, what poor they had relieved, and to what exiles they had sent alms. But it is not necessary to enlarge on this subject. The advantage of the Christian cause in the promotion of liberality and benevolence among mankind, above all religions, is perhaps the only thing generally allowed even by infidels. Symmachus being foiled at present, renewed the same attempt before the emperor Theo-

dosius, and was vanquished a second time by the eloquence and influence of Ambrose.

This prelate by his talents in negociation at the court of Maximus, averted for a time the invasion of Italy from the court of Milan. But nothing could move the mind of Justina in his favour. In the year 386, she procured a law to enable the Arian congregations to assemble without interruption.

Auxentius, a Scythian, of the same name with the Arian predecessor of Ambrose, was now introduced, under the protection of the empress, into Milan. He challenged Ambrose to hold a disputation with him in the emperor's court; which occasioned the bishop to write to Valentinian, that it was no part of the emperor's business to decide in points of doctrine. 'Let him come to church,' says he, 'and upon hearing, let the people judge for themselves; and if they like Auxentius better, let them take him: but they have already declared their sentiments.' More violent measures were now resorted to, and the fortitude of Ambrose was tried in a manner which he had hitherto not experienced. Auxentius moved, that a party of soldiers might be sent to secure for himself the possession of the church called Basilica: and tribunes came to demand it, with the plate and vessels belonging to it. At the same time, there were those who represented, that it was an unreasonable thing, that the emperor should not be allowed to have one place of worship which was agreeable to his conscience. The language was specious, but deceitful. Justina and her son, if they had thought it prudent to exert their authority, might have commanded the use not of one only, but of all the churches: but the demand of the court was, that Ambrose should do what in conscience he could not; that he should, by his own deed, resign the church into Arian hands, which, as circumstances then stood, would have been to acknowledge, indirectly at least, the Arian creed. He therefore calmly answered the

officers, that if the emperor had sent to demand his house or land, money or goods, he would have freely resigned them, but that he could not deliver that which was committed to his care. In the congregation he that day told the people, that he would not willingly desert his right: that if compelled, he knew not how to resist. 'I can grieve,' says he, 'I can weep, I can groan. Against arms and soldiers, tears are my arms. Such are the fortifications of a pastor. I neither can nor ought to resist in any other manner. Our Lord Jesus is Almighty; what he commands to be done shall be fulfilled, nor does it become you to resist the divine sentence.' It seemed proper to state in his own words what his conduct was; and it appears that he abated nothing of the maxims of passive submission to the civil power, which Christians had ever practised from the days of St. Paul, and that there is not the least ground to accuse Ambrose of disloyalty to his prince. He had served him already faithfully, and we shall see presently that he is again ready to expose himself to danger for his service. The court knew his principles, and seem not to have had the least fear that he should draw the people into rebellion; but they wished to menace him into a degree of compliance with Arianism.

Ambrose during the suspension of this affair employed the people in singing divine hymns and psalms, at the end of which there was a solemn doxology to the honour of the Trinity. The method of responsive singing had been gradually practised in the East, and was introduced by Ambrose into Milan, whence it was propagated into all the churches. The people were much delighted, their zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity was inflamed, and one of the best judges in the world, who then lived at Milan, owns that his own soul was melted into divine affection on these occasions.

The demands of the court were now increased:

not only the Portian church which stood without the walls, but also the great church newly built within the city, were required to be given up. On the Lord's day, after sermon, the catechumens being dismissed, Ambrose went to baptize those who were prepared for that ordinance, when he was told that officers were sent from the court to the Portian church; he went on, however, and moved in the service, till he was told, that the people having met with Castulus an Arian presbyter in the street, had laid hands on him. Then with prayers and tears he besought God, that no man's blood might be shed, but rather his own, not only for the pious people, but also for the wicked. And he immediately sent some presbyters and deacons, who recovered Castulus safe from the tumult. The court however, enraged, sent out warrants for apprehending several merchants and tradesmen; men were put in chains, and vast sums of money were required to be paid in a little time, which many professed they would pay cheerfully, if they were suffered to enjoy the profession of their faith unmolested. By this time the prisons were full of tradesmen, and the magistrates and men of rank were severely threatened; while the courtiers pressed Ambrose with the imperial authority; whom he answered with the same loyalty and firmness as before. The Holy Spirit, said he, in his exhortation to the people, has spoken in you this day, to this effect: 'Emperor, we entreat, but we do not fight.' The Arians, having few friends among the people, kept themselves within doors. A notary coming to the bishop from the emperor, asked him, whether he intended to usurp the empire? 'I have an empire,' says he, 'it is true, but it lies in weakness, according to that saying of the apostle, "when I am weak, then am I strong."' Even Maximus will clear me of this charge, since he will confess, it was through my embassy he was kept from the invasion of Italy.' Wearied and overcome at length with

his resolution, the court, who meant to obtain his consent, rather than to exercise violence, ordered the guards to leave the church, where the bishop had lodged all night; the soldiers having guarded it so close, that none had been suffered to go out; and the people confined there having spent their time in singing psalms. The sums exacted of the tradesmen also were restored. Peace was made for the present, though Ambrose had still reason to fear for himself, and expressed his desire, in the epistle which he wrote to his sister Marcellina, that God would defend his church, and let its enemies rather satiate their rage with his blood.

The spirit of devotion was kept up all this time among the people, and Ambrose was indefatigable both in praying and preaching. Being called on by the people to consecrate a new church, he told them, that he would, if he could find any relics of martyrs there. Let us not make the superstition of these times greater than it was. It was lamentably great; enough to stain the piety with which it was mixed. We are told, that it had been revealed to him in a vision at night, in what place he might find the relics. But in the epistle which he writes on the subject, he says no such thing. He describes, however, the finding of the bodies of two martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius, the supposed miracles wrought on the occasion, the dedication of the church, the triumph of the orthodox, and the confusion of Arianism. Ambrose himself too much encouraged all this, and in a language which favoured the introduction of other intercessors besides the Lord Jesus Christ, whom yet it is evident he supremely loved and trusted in for salvation. In all this, the candid and intelligent reader will see the conflict between godliness and superstition maintained in the church of Milan, both existing in some vigour, and each at present checking the growth of the other.

The news of Maximus's intention to invade Italy,

arriving at this time, threw the court of Milan into the greatest trepidation. Again Justina implored the bishop to undertake an embassy to the usurper, which he cheerfully undertook, and executed with great fortitude; but it was not in his power to stop the progress of the enemy. Theodosius, who reigned in the east, coming at length to the assistance of Valentinian, put an end to the usurpation and the life of Maximus. By his means, the young emperor was induced to forsake his mother's principles, and to form at least to embrace those of Ambrose. Whether he was ever truly converted to God, is not so clear. That he was reconciled to Ambrose, and loved him highly, is certain: and in the year 392, in which he lost his life by a second usurpation in the west, he sent for Ambrose to come to baptize him. The bishop in his journey heard of his death, with which he was deeply affected, and wrote to Theodosius concerning him with all the marks of sorrow, and composed a funeral oration in his praise.

X.—THE CHURCH UNDER THEODOSIUS.

It will be proper to look a little more particularly at the conduct of this prince towards the church. He had been preserved in his younger years from the jealousy of Valens, who, by some superstition had been led to suspect those, whose names began with **T H E**, and to seek their destruction. After his exaltation to the empire from a private life by the generous and patriotic choice of Gratian, he reigned in the east, more vigorously supporting Christianity according to his ideas of it, than any emperor before him. His sense of justice, however, determined him to order some Christians to rebuild at their own expense a Jewish synagogue, which they had tumultuously pulled down. I mention with concern yet with historical veracity, that Ambrose prevailed on him to set aside his sentence, from a wish

notion of piety, that christianity should not be obliged to contribute to the erection of a Jewish synagogue. If the Jews were tolerated at all in the empire, the transaction ought certainly to have been looked on as a civil one. This is the first instance I recollect in which a good man was induced, by superstitious motives, to break the essential rules of justice, and it marks the growth of superstition. Nor is there any thing in the declamatory eloquence of Ambrose, which moves me to pass a different judgment.

The Luciferians still existing, entreated this emperor to grant them liberty of conscience; confessing themselves to be Christians, and contending that it was wrong in others to give them a sectarian name; at the same time declaring that they coveted not the riches and grandeur of other churches, and in their censures not sparing Hilary of Poitiers and Athanasius. These last were doubtless men of great uprightness and integrity. What they themselves were is not so evident as it were to be wished, because of the scantiness of information. They speak with extraordinary respect of Gregory, bishop of Elvira, as the chief of their communion; a man doubtless of high estimation, because Theodosius himself admits it, and grants them a legal toleration. I have before spoken of this class of dissenters, among whom, I apprehend, it is probable, marks of the presence of God might be found, if their history had come down to us. But the reader who knows how slight our information of these things is, while church history dwells chiefly on what is scandalous, not what is excellent, will not be surprised at my silence. The sect itself vanished soon after.

Theodosius was of a passionate temper, and on a particular occasion was led by it to commit a barbarous action; the circumstances of the story will be the best comment on the character of this emperor, of Ambrose, and of the times. At Thessalonica a

tumult was made by the populace, and the emperor's officer was murdered. The news was calculated to try the temper of Theodosius, who ordered the sword to be let loose upon them. Ambrose interceded, and the emperor promised to forgive. But the great officers of the court persuaded him to retract, and to sign a warrant for military execution. It was executed with great cruelty. Seven thousand were massacred in three hours, without trial, and without distinction!

Ambrose wrote him a faithful letter, reminding him of the charge in the prophecy, that if the priest does not warn the wicked he shall be answerable for it. 'You discover a zeal,' says he, 'for the faith and fear of God, I own; but your temper is warm, soon to be appeased indeed, if endeavours are used to calm it; but if not regulated, it bears down all before it.' He urges the example of David, and shows the impropriety of communicating with him at present. 'I love you,' says he, 'I cherish you, I pray for you; but blame not me, if I give the preference to God.' On these principles Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius into the church of Milan. The emperor pleaded the case of David. 'Imitate him,' says the zealous bishop, 'in his repentance, as well as in his sin.' Theodosius submitted, and kept from the church eight months. On the feast of the nativity, he expressed his sorrow with sighs and tears, in the presence of Rufinus the master of the offices. 'I weep,' said he, 'that the temple of God, and consequently heaven, is shut from me, which is open to slaves and beggars.' Rufinus undertook to persuade the bishop to admit the emperor. Ambrose urged the impropriety of his rude interference, because Rufinus, by his evil counsels, had been the author of the massacre. Rufinus telling him that the emperor was coming, 'I will hinder him,' says he, 'from entering the vestibule; yet if he will play the king, I shall offer him my throat.' Rufinus returning, informed

the emperor; 'I will go, and receive the refusal which I desire,' says he. And as he approached the bishop, he added, 'I come to offer myself, to submit to what you prescribe.' Ambrose enjoined him to do public penance, and to suspend the execution of capital warrants for thirty days in future, in order that the ill effects of intemperate anger might be prevented. The emperor, pulling off his imperial robes, prayed prostrate on the pavement, nor did he put on those robes, till the time of his penance was expired. "My soul cleaveth to the dust," said he, "quicken thou me, according to thy word." The people prayed and wept with him, and he not only complied with the rules of penance, but retained visible marks of compunction and sadness during the rest of his life.

Let us make as candid an estimate, as we can, of this extraordinary affair: I say, as we can. Moderns hardly can be sufficiently candid; so different are our sentiments and views. It is certain that these rules of humiliation are too severe, too formal, and by no means properly calculated to instruct: the growth also of superstition, and the immoderate exercise of episcopal power, are both strikingly evident. But what then? Was Theodosius a mean abject prince, and Ambrose a haughty or hypocritical pontiff? Neither the one nor the other is true. The general life of the former evinces him a great and wise prince, who had the true fear of God before his eyes: and the latter thought he did no more than what the office, which he bore, required; and his affectionate regard for the emperor, and sincere concern for his soul, appear evident. On the whole, the discipline itself thus magnanimously exercised by Ambrose, and humbly submitted to by Theodosius, when stripped of its superstitions and formalities, was salutary. Who does not see, that the contempt of discipline in our days, among the great, has proved extremely pernicious to the interests of practical religion?

After the murder of Valentinian, a person named Eugenius usurped the empire of the west, who again erected the altar of victory, and encouraged the pagans; but their hopes were of short duration. Theodosius soon stripped him of his life and power, and thus became sole master of the Roman world. Under his authority the extirpation of idolatry was carried on with more decisive vigour than ever. At Alexandria the votaries of the renowned temple of Serapis made an insurrection, and murdered a number of Christians. The emperor, being informed of this, declared that he would not suffer the glory of their martyrdom to be stained with any execrations, and that he was determined to pardon the murderers in hopes of their conversion, but that the temple, the cause of so much mischief, should be destroyed. There was a remarkable image of Serapis in the temple, of which it had been confidently given out, that if any man touched it, the earth would open, the heaven be dissolved, and all things run back into a general chaos. A soldier, however, animated by Theophilus the bishop, was so hardy as to make the experiment. With an axe he cleft him down the jaws; an army of mice fled out at the breach he had made; and Serapis was hacked in pieces. On the destruction of idolatry in Egypt, it happened that the Nile did not overflow so plentifully as it had been wont to do. It is, said the pagans, because it is affronted at the prevailing impiety; it has not been worshipped with sacrifice, as it is used to be. Theodosius, being informed of this, declared like a man who believed in God, and preferred heavenly things to earthly; 'We ought to prefer our duty to God to the streams of the Nile, and the cause of piety to the fertility of the country; let the Nile never flow again rather than idolatry be encouraged.' The event afforded a fine comment on our Saviour's words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." The Nile returned

to its course, and rose above the highest mark, which at other times it seldom reached. The pagans, overcome in argument, made use of ridicule, the great sanctuary of profaneness, and cried out in their theatres, that the old dotting god was grown so weak, that he could not hold his water. Numbers, however, made a more serious use of the remarkable providence, and Egypt forsook the superstition, in which for so many ages it had been involved. And thus the country which had nourished idolatry more early and more passionately than others, was made the special scene of the triumphs of God and his Christ.

Libanius, the friend of Julian, was yet alive, and held the office of Pretorian prefect under the emperor. The gentleness of this prince encouraged the sophist to present him with an oration in favour of the temples: in which he trode in the steps of Symmachus, and pleaded the cause of the gods, as well as so bad a subject would admit. It is remarkable, that he argued, 'Religion ought to be planted in men's minds by reason, not by force.' Thus pagans could now talk, who for ages had acted towards Christians in so different a manner. The writer of this oration was himself a palpable instance of the clemency of Christian governors compared with pagan. He lived in a respectable situation, unmolested, the champion of expiring paganism; and many others were treated in the same manner.

Coming to Rome, the zealous emperor in a deliberate speech endeavoured to persuade the senate, very many of whom still patronised idolatry, to embrace the Christian faith, as the only religion which taught men how to obtain pardon of sin, and holiness of life. The Gentile part of them declared, that they would not give up a religion under which Rome had prospered near twelve hundred years. Theodosius told them, that he saw no reason, why he should maintain their religion, and that he would not only *cease to furnish the expense out of the exchequer,*

but abolish the sacrifices themselves. The senators complained, that the neglect of the rites was the grand cause why the empire declined so much: a specious argument, well calculated to gain upon worldly minds, and which had great effect on many pagans at this time. We may see by and by, what a laboured and animated answer to it was written by one of the greatest and ablest of the fathers. Theodosius now made it a capital crime to sacrifice or attend the pagan rites. In vain did the patrons of idolatry exercise their parts and assiduity. The emperor was determined, and issued out a law which made it treasonable to offer sacrifice, or to consult the entrails of beasts. Incense and perfumes were likewise forbidden. Paganism never lifted up its head after this; habit alone supported it; and objects of sense being removed, zeal was extinguished, and as Theodosius was not disposed to make martyrs, no pagans felt any inclination to become such. The great prince expired at Milan in the year 395, about sixty years of age, having reigned sixteen years. And the century before us nearly closes with the establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire. The religion which was of God made its way through all opposition; that which was of man, supported only by power and custom, failed to thrive, as soon as it lost the ascendant, and within a generation it ceased almost universally to exist among men.

XI THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL, THE PROGRESS OF HERESIES AND SUPERSTITION; AND THE LEADING CHARACTERS OF THIS CENTURY

I HAVE but little to say on each of these articles partly, because materials are scanty, and partly because where they are more plentiful, they are uninteresting. Let us, however, collect from them, if we can, an enlivening ray or two of the church of Christ.

The Goths had long harassed the Roman empire

with their incursions; but their depredations were made subservient to the progress of the gospel. I have observed, under the last century, that some captive bishops laboured among them with good success. And the work was of an abiding nature. Ulfilas, who is called the Apostle of the Goths, was descended from some of these. He, coming as ambassador to Constantine, was ordained first bishop of the Christian Goths by Eusebius of Nicomedia. I have shown from a passage in Theodoret, that the Arians seem to have imposed upon him by an ambiguity of terms, in consequence of which he drew over his Goths to communicate with that sect. Certain it is, that this people held the Nicene faith for a considerable time, if we may credit Augustine. In the time of Valens, many of them suffered death from an idolatrous persecuting prince of their own. Ulfilas coming from his countrymen on an embassy to Valens, that he might induce him to allow them a settlement in Thrace, was, on that occasion, brought over to communicate with the Arians. That he was a man of superior genius and endowments is certain. He civilized and polished this barbarous people, and first introduced the use of letters among them, and translated the scriptures into their tongue for their use, omitting the books of the Kings, because he thought it might encourage the ferociousness of the Goths, who were already too warlike. A copy of his version of the four gospels is still extant, a monument of the ancient Teutonic language. It is with regret I leave the account of this great man so imperfect, whose labours and success seem to show, that the hand of the Lord must have been with him. But, however innocent he and his contemporaries might be of the Arian heresy, the effect of their communication with the party was what might be foreseen. The whole church of the Goths, by degrees at least, came into Arianism, and the consequences will meet us in the course of this history.

Heresies multiplied in this century, chiefly through the various ramifications of Arianism, which have been explained with more than sufficient accuracy by many writers. Of the dissenters, the Meletians continued throughout the century. The Donatists still remained in all their ferocity, of whom it will be more convenient to speak hereafter. The Novatians have found in the candid Socrates, an historian who gives us some authentic information, having himself been acquainted with the son of one of their presbyters. In Phrygia and Paphlagonia, their church was in a flourishing state at this time. The general church, though surely right in its principle of opposition to the particular point of Novatian inflexibility, yet afterwards abused the licence of re-admission into the church granted to offenders ; and as discipline relaxed in various places, all kinds of crimes abounded.

Monasticism continued to make a rapid progress through this whole century. It is not worth-while to trace its progress particularly, nor to recite any of the ridiculous frauds, abuses and superstitions, which were connected with it. Self-righteous formality made rapid strides in the Christian world ; one single observation, however, of an author, who has recorded much of this trash with great complacency, will deserve to be transcribed. " Most of these famous monks," says Sozomen, " lived to extreme old age ; and I think that this was a mean of facilitating the progress of Christianity. Antioch excepted, Syria was very late in receiving the gospel, and these monks were highly instrumental in the work, both in that country, and among the Persians and Saracens."

Gregory Nyssen, brother of the famous Basil, was the bishop of Nyssa, a city of Cappadocia. Basil, and two of his brothers, embraced a solitary life ; but Gregory married, and lived in society. Under Valens, he was faithful, and had the honour to be

expelled from his church. In the year 378, he was restored. He died toward the end of the century. In a catechetical discourse, he shows a sound judgment, in laying down different rules of argumentation with Pagans, Jews, and Heretics. To defend the incarnation of God, he shows that man is fallen and corrupted, and can be recovered only by his Creator; and hence, that the Word who created him, came himself to raise him again. He shows, also, that to be born of a virgin, to eat, to drink, to die, and to be buried, are not things unbecoming the holy nature of God, because there is no sin in them; and that the divinity, united to man, lost not its perfections, any more than the soul loses its properties by its union with the body.

Once visiting Jerusalem, he was hospitably received by three religious ladies of note there, Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa, and contemplated with delight the scenes of our Lord's abode on earth. But he tell us, that he found there little of true religion, and returned sorrowful to Antioch, whence he wrote to the three ladies, and cautioned them against being imposed on by those who desired to make a prey of them. Being asked by a friend, whether it was an essential part of religion to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he answered in the negative; and that a man had more reason to expect the Spirit of God in Cappadocia, where true piety prevailed, than at Jerusalem, where, it seems, religion was run to a very low ebb. Thus much for Gregory Nyssen, whose piety at least deserves our regard, though, as an author, he is in no very high estimation.

Ephraim the Syrian was born at Nisibis in Mesopotamia, of Christian parents, and was educated with great care from his infancy. His turn of mind from childhood was devout, studious, and contemplative, to an extreme degree. And since few persons in that age knew how to unite the real Christian

life with the practice of all the duties of society, it is not to be wondered at, that the solitary taste prevailed much in Ephraim. It is rather a proof of uncommon good sense or charity, or of both, that at length he could be induced to quit his solitude, and live in the great city of Edessa, for the sake of enjoying the benefit of Christian assemblies, and of rendering himself useful to his fellow-creatures. He wrote much on the scriptures, and composed various devotional pieces in the Syriac, his native tongue, which, in his own life-time, were translated into Greek, and were much admired by all the eastern churches. He never was advanced farther in the ecclesiastical state than to the office of deacon, and once he took a very extraordinary method to avoid being preferred to the office of a bishop. He feigned madness, and escaped. The reader will recollect something similar in the conduct of Ambrose, and may take occasion to lament the unhappy extremes of opposite kinds, which, in different ages have disfigured the church. In Ephraim's days, the pastoral character appeared to good men awful beyond measure, requiring little less than angelical virtue. In our days, is not conveniency and love of gain frequently the principal motive, and decency of character the principal qualification?

I scarcely have found a saint who had better views, since the days of Cyprian, unless we except Ambrose of Milan. But by far the greater part of really good men, in this whole century, and in the latter part of the last, lived comparatively, in bondage, looking to Jesus, sincerely, though confused. One person, however, was training up under the special guidance of God, in the latter part of this century, whose superior light was appointed to illuminate the next, as we shall see by and by. But how does the piety, the humility, the conscientiousness of such men as Ephraim, with all their abject superstition, rebuke the pride and carelessness and levity

of many now evangelized in the head, and not in the heart, who trifle with the light, and live in sin, because they conceive grace to abound !

Hilary was born at Poitiers in France, and being of a very noble family, and distinguished by a liberal education, he was enabled to throw a lustre on Christianity after he received it. In his book on the Trinity, he gives us some account of his conversion.

His views of the Three Persons in the Trinity are remarkably perspicuous and scriptural. In speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says, that He enlightens our understandings and warms our hearts ; that he is the author of all grace, and will be with us to the end of the world ; that he is our comforter here while we live in expectation of a future life, the earnest of our hopes, the light of our minds, and the warmth of our souls. He directs us to pray for this Holy Spirit, to enable us to do good, and to persevere in faith and obedience.

Hilary, after his conversion, was singularly exemplary in his attachment to the Gospel, avoiding any appearance of countenancing the fashionable heresies, and employed himself in recommending his religion to others. He was married, and had by his wife a daughter called Abra, whose education he superintended with great exactness. The gradual progress of superstition may be remarked from his case. He certainly cohabited with his wife after he was appointed bishop of Poitiers, and yet he strongly recommended his daughter to devote herself wholly to the service of Christ by a state of virginity. To relate his active employment in the Arian controversy, would be again to introduce a subject with which the reader has been already satiated. Suffice it to say, that he spent some time in banishment, in Phrygia, for the sake of a good conscience ; that he was at length restored to his see, and that by his lenity on the one hand, which provoked the Luciferians, and by his constancy on the other, which of-

fended the Arian emperor, he was yet enabled to be of signal service to the church, and was to the West what Athanasius was to the East, the pillar of orthodoxy. He died at Poitiers about the year 367. To him the great church at Poitiers is dedicated, and in the midst of the city is a column erected to him, with an inscription, at once expressive of the admiration of his virtues, and of the superstition of those who wrote it.

Basil, surnamed the great, on account of his learning and piety, was descended from Christian ancestors, who suffered much during the persecution of Dioclesian. His grandmother Macrina, herself a Confessor for the faith of Christ, and a disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus, was eminently useful to him in superintending his education, and fixing his principles. After a strict domestic education in Cappadocia, his native country, he travelled for improvement in knowledge, according to the custom of those whose circumstances enabled them to bear the expense, and came to Athens. Here he met with Gregory Nazianzen, with whom he had a very cordial intimacy. At length, leaving him there, he came to Constantinople, and put himself under the care of the famous Libanius. It is certain, that he was possessed of all the secular learning of the age, and if he had chosen to give himself wholly to the world he might have shone as much as superior parts, strong understanding, and indefatigable industry united can effect. But his mind was under a spiritual influence; he found an emptiness in the most refined enjoyments of literature; even Athens itself, he called a vain felicity. He was led to seek for food for his soul, and in conjunction with Gregory he studied the works of Origen; and some monuments of their veneration for that learned father are still extant.

It will scarcely be needful to add, that, by this means, he contracted a taste for expository writing

the most evangelical nor the most perspicuous. In his travels into Egypt he conversed with monks and hermits, and prepared himself for that excessive attachment to the spirit of ascetics, which afterwards made him the great supporter and encourager of those superstitions.

After some time, he lived in retirement at Neocæsarea in Pontus, and by his example, concurring with the spirit of the times, he not only drew over his friend Gregory, but also great numbers, to embrace a retired life, and to employ themselves in prayer, singing of psalms, and devotional exercises. And here, these two friends formed the rules of monastic discipline, which were the basis of those superstitious institutions which afterwards overran the church.

Returning, after a time, to Cæsarea, he distinguished himself by inducing the rich to supply the necessities of the poor during a grievous famine; and all the world gave him credit both for his charity in relieving the distressed, and for his integrity in resisting the importunities of Valens, the Arian emperor.

The see of Cæsarea being vacant, the authority of the aged Gregory, bishop of Nazianzum, the father of his friend, was sincerely exerted for his promotion; and to this see he was at length advanced, notwithstanding the opposition of the Arians. He was soon called to withstand the repeated attacks of Valens; and though he was in the utmost danger of being banished from his see, he remained immoveable in the profession of the faith.

Let us attend a little to the pastoral character of Basil. He found that the church of Cæsarea, before his time, had been scandalously neglected in its discipline. Officers who were a disgrace to religion, ministered in the church, and the subaltern superintendents ordained men without the knowledge of the bishop, and without any just examination; and many pressed into the ministry for mere secular reasons: it

was reported that some were even guilty of selling the priesthood for money; the crime usually known by the name of simony. Basil reminded his clergy of the strictness of the primitive discipline, and of the care formerly exercised by the presbyters and deacons in examining the lives and manners of the persons to be ordained: and he made earnest attempts to revive these laudable customs; inveighing against simony as most detestable.

It would be tedious to describe the diverse contests in which Basil was engaged. Calumny, malice, and the domineering power of Arianism, afflicted him with various trials, in which his patience was unwearied; and as his body became enfeebled by increasing distempers, his mind seems to have collected more vigour. Finding himself rapidly declining, after he had governed the church of Cæsarea eight years and some months, he ordained some of his followers, and was then obliged to take his bed. The people flocked about his house, sensible of the value of such a pastor. For a time he discoursed piously to those who were about him, and sealed his last breath with the ejaculation, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

It is much to be lamented, that a man so sincerely pious, so profoundly learned, and of so elegant and accomplished a genius, should have suffered so much, both in mind and body, from the monastic spirit. But his excessive austerities broke his constitution, and left him, for years, in a very imperfect state of health. He died in the year 379.

Gregory Nazianzen was born at Ariazum, an obscure village belonging to Nazianzum in Cappadocia, and came into the world about the time of the Nicene council. His father, of the same name, a person of rank, had been brought up among a particular sect, most resembling the Samaritans, who professed a mixture of judaism and paganism. To this opinion, as it had been the religion of his family,

Gregory the elder was in early life extremely devoted. But marrying a lady of rank, and of sincere Christian piety, he was gradually induced to attend to the doctrines of the gospel. Her prayers and persuasions were equally ardent. Gregory the elder dreaming one night, that they sung that passage, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and feeling an uncommon pleasure on the occasion, informed his wife of the circumstance, who exhorted him to comply with the call of God to his soul. And soon after, Leontius, bishop of Cæsarea, coming to Nazianzum, in his way to the council of Nice, Gregory the elder was encouraged and assisted by him, and then received from the bishop of Nazianzum catechetical instruction, and the ordinance of baptism.

Nazianzum itself had but newly received Christianity. The bishop who baptized Gregory the elder, was the first of its pastors, and died soon after. A long vacancy took place, and the town was overrun with ignorance and vice. Gregory the elder at length was appointed to the see, which he filled for forty-five years with great success among the people. His son, Gregory the younger, the famous Gregory, usually called Gregory Nazianzen, making uncommon advances in learning, in several seminaries, went to Athens to complete his education.

After his baptism, he felt himself strongly inclined to the ascetic life, but was, though reluctant, made a presbyter by his father. The old man, better versed in prayer than disputation, was once imposed on, by Arian subtleties, to communicate with that sect, while he took them to be what they were not, but was recovered from the snare by the arguments of his more learned son. The latter, after giving way for a time to the monastic spirit of solitude, was prevailed on at length to return to Nazianzum, and to employ himself in a manner more worthy of a Christian, by assisting his aged father in his pastoral care.

His father dying near a hundred years old, and his mother soon after, both of them persons of uncommon piety. Gregory was induced to go to Constantinople. Here, under the emperor Valens, Arianism was at its height, and Gregory preached to a few Christians in a sort of conventicle; but, growing popular and successful, he was at last appointed bishop; and at length, under Theodosius, he was confirmed in the charge. It proved, however, extremely uneasy to him, notwithstanding the kindness of the emperor. His liberality and integrity were indeed admirable, and his private life and manners were most exemplary. But the weakness of his body, the irritability of his temper, and his extreme deficiency in talents for government, render him, notwithstanding the just renown of his incomparable oratory, unfit for so public a station.

However, he exerted himself sincerely to promote unity in the church, and was unbounded in his liberality to the poor. In his time he was looked on as an admirable theologian. And indeed, in justice of taste, eloquence, and secular learning, he was superior to few; and these shining qualities, in an age more contentious than simple with respect to religion, procured him an admiration for Christian knowledge above his deserts. He died in the year 389, in his own country.

Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, was not inferior to many in this century for unfeigned purity of life and manners. But the particulars of his life are for the most part uninteresting. It is proper, however, to mention his zeal in tearing a painted curtain which he saw in a place of public worship. This seems at once a proof of his detestation of images and pictures in religion, and also of the weak beginnings of that superstition in the fourth century. In this place let us not omit to observe his very laudable spirit of beneficence. Numbers from all parts sent him large sums to distribute to the needy, in an

dence of his charity and integrity. His steward one day informed him, that his stock was nearly exhausted, and blamed his profuse liberality; but he continued still as liberal as before, till all was gone; when he received suddenly from a stranger a large bag of gold. Another story deserves to be recorded as a monument of Divine Providence, the rather, as it seems extremely well authenticated. Two beggars agreeing to impose upon him, one feigned himself dead, the other begged of Epiphanius to supply the expenses of his companion's funeral. Epiphanius granted the request; the beggar on the departure of the bishop desired his companion to rise; but the man was really dead!—To sport with the servants of God, and to abuse their kindness, is to provoke God himself, as the bishop told the survivor.

Chrysostom was, at the commencement of the fifth century, bishop of Constantinople, where the emperor Arcadius resided, while his brother Honorius reigned in the West: these two were the sons and successors of the great Theodosius. He was born at Antioch, about the year 354. His parents were persons of some rank, and by the care of his mother (for he lost his father soon after his birth) his education was attended to in a very particular manner. By her means, he had the advantage of being early prejudiced in favour of Christianity. Yet, being naturally studious of eloquence, he devoted himself to the care of that great master, Libanius of Antioch, who being one day asked, who would be capable of succeeding him in this school; 'John,' said he, 'if the Christians had not stolen him from us.' So great was the idea he had formed of his powers of eloquence.

He prognosticated right. It would be easy to produce abundance of instances of his oratorical abilities. I wish it were in my power to record as many of his evangelical excellences.

Notwithstanding the entreaties of his pious mother, he lived in monastic austerities for some time; after

which, Flavian, bishop of Antioch, promoted him to the office of presbyter in his diocese. About the year 379, a sedition broke out at Antioch on account of taxes, and the people dragged about the streets the statues of Theodosius, and of his excellent lady Flaccilla, and of their two sons, in contempt. But finding afterwards the danger of the emperor's resentment, this inconstant and turbulent people were in the greatest distress. Antioch had ever been very favourable to the name, at least, of Christianity, since the time that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. But luxury and the love of the world, were, it is to be feared, much more common in these times than godliness, even among the Christian inhabitants. About two hundred thousand citizens made up the sum total; and half of them were Christians. John failed not to improve the opportunity.

His spirit was softened and overawed with the mingled sensations of pity and devotion, while he observed the severe proceedings of the courts, and the vain intercessions of relations for husbands and fathers. He was led to reflect how awful the day of judgment will be, when not a mother, sister, or father can arrest the course of Divine justice, or give the least relief to nearest relations; and, in his homilies, he with much eloquence and piety enforced these considerations on a giddy, unthinking people. Pastors may take the hint from hence to improve temporal scenes to the spiritual benefit of their audiences.

The generous and good-natured Theodosius expostulated with Flavian on the unreasonableness and ingratitude of the citizens of Antioch to himself, who had ever been as a parent and benefactor to them. Flavian, admitting the truth of his observations and confessing the aggravated guilt of the city, presented him with the divine rule, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive

you. And his pathetic and pious admonitions prevailed. Theodosius owned, that if the great Lord of the world, for our sake, became a servant, and prayed for his murderers, it highly became himself to forgive his fellow-servants; and with great tenderness he solicited the bishop to hasten his return, and to deliver the citizens from their fears. In the mean time the active charity of the monks and clergy had prevailed on the judges to suspend their proceedings till they heard from the emperor; and Flavian himself returned at length with the news of the city being fully restored to his favour.

In the year 398, Chrysostom, by the advice of Eutropius, chief chamberlain of the palace, was appointed bishop of Constantinople, being hurried thither by a fraudulent scheme, such as he himself had approved in like cases. The emperor Arcadius, a character of the most insipid insignificance, fixed in the metropolitan chair a person of great integrity, activity, and virtue indeed; but surely not through any wisdom of his own. John began immediately to attempt the reformation of his diocese. He put an end to a custom of the clergy of keeping matrons in their families, which caused much scandal; he censured their covetousness and their luxury; retrenched the expenses of the bishop's table, and applied the surplus to the needy; built a large hospital for the infirm, and put it under the most salutary regulations. Such ministers as refused to amend their lives, he suspended from their offices; and the widows who were maintained by the church, were admonished to abstain from their gay manner of living, or else to marry. And he pressed the laity, whose employment filled up the day, to attend divine worship in the evening.

But having offended the empress Eudoxia, he was removed from his see, and banished to the shores of the Black Sea. Here he breathed his last, in the fifty-third year of his age, in the year 407.

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CENTURY V.

1.—AUGUSTINE.

From the latter end of the third century to the former part of the fifth, we have seen a gradual decline of godliness; and when we view in the West an increase of monastic darkness and superstition.—in the East, the same evils to a still greater degree, attended with such an augmentation of iniquity, and even where all the formalities of godliness are preserved, the power of it is hated and persecuted, in the same manner as by Pagans; in fine, when the vestiges of Christian truth are scarcely discernible, we shall not be far amiss in pronouncing, that, in such a state of religion, the wholesome effects of the first effusion of the Spirit of God are brought to a close.

It is evident, that real Christianity, notwithstanding its nominal increase under Christian emperors, must soon have been extinct, if God had not intervened with a second great effusion of his Spirit, did so in the course of the fifth century, and the church rose again from its ruins in one part at least of the empire.

It behoves us to attend to this gracious display of divine goodness; and for this purpose, we turn back into the last century, to trace the series of

of this dispensation. They particularly concern the life of Augustine, bishop of Hippo. He was the great instrument of reviving the knowledge of evangelical truth. By a very remarkable work of divine grace on his own soul, he was qualified to contend with the growing corruptions. We have, in his Confessions, a large and distinct account of his own conversion; an account deeply interesting, but of too great length for our confined limits.

Augustine, after his conversion, returned with some friends into Africa, and lived upon his own estate for almost three years, retired from the world. A desire to oblige a person of some consequence in Hippo, who requested his instructions, brought him at length to that city, where Valerius was bishop,—a person of great piety; but, on account of his slender acquaintance with the Latin tongue, scarcely adequate to the office of pastor in that place. Augustine, through the strong and urgent desires of the people, was ordained presbyter to Valerius; but wept on the occasion, from the genuine sense which he had of the importance of the office. Valerius rejoiced that God had heard his prayers, and that the people would now be supplied with such a pastor. He gave him licence to preach in the presence of the bishop, a thing before unknown in Africa; but which, from the good effects of this precedent, afterwards grew common. Here his ministry was useful in the instruction and edification of the brethren, and also in the defeat of various heresies. Divine truth, which had been almost buried amidst many schisms and distractions in Africa, now raised up its head again; and Fortunatus, the great leader of the Manichees, was obliged, in confusion, to leave Hippo, when he found himself, by the confession of the hearers, vanquished in a conference with Augustine.

Heretics vied with the members of the general church in their attention to the pastoral labours of *Augustine*, whose fame began gradually to spread

throughout the Western world. Valerius rejoiced and gave thanks on the account; and being solicitous to preserve such a treasure to his church, he took care to get Augustine elected bishop of Hippo, in conjunction with himself. Age and infirmities rendered Valerius very inadequate to the work, and every true Christian will doubt which more to admire, the godly zeal of Augustine, tempered with modesty and charity, or the unfeigned humility of Valerius. Augustine, after he had strongly resisted the inclinations of the bishop and all the church, at length accepted the office; the duties of which he continued to discharge after the decease of Valerius. His zeal and laboriousness increased with his authority. The monastery of his institution became renowned in Africa; and about ten bishops of undoubted piety came from this seminary. These instituted numerous churches after the same pattern, and from them churches were supplied with pastors; and the doctrines of faith, hope, and charity, by these means and also by Augustine's writings, which were translated into the Greek tongue, were diffused and enforced with increasing vigour through the Christian world. His writings, however, do not seem to have had any permanent influence in the Eastern church.

Now that the holy influence of the Spirit of God was generally damped by superstition, or quenched by licentiousness, Satan felt himself emboldened to erect a new heresy, which should pretend to the height of purity, supported by mere human nature exclusive of the operations of divine grace altogether. This was Pelagianism: and as this error entered the church for the first time, and in a greater or less degree has continued to this day, as it is directly subversive of Christianity, and as it introduced a controversy, not trivial and frivolous as many others, but of unspeakable importance, it eminently falls within the plan of this history.

state the circumstances and consequences with perspicuity.

Pelagius was born in Britain, and was, in his own time, called Brito. His companion Coelestius was an Irishman, as we are informed by Jerom. He calls him a Scot, and that name in those times meant, as is known to the learned, a native of Ireland. They were both laymen; the former, by profession, a monk, who, as far as appears, always maintained a character of fair and decent morals. In the heat of contention there were some who denied this; but it is admitted by Augustine with his usual candour, and we might have been certain of it, independently of his authority; because otherwise it would have been impossible for such a man ever to have become a person of lasting reputation in the religious world. He travelled from monastery to monastery, through various parts of the empire. His heretical opinions did not appear till he was far advanced in life; before that time Augustine owns (though he speaks by hearsay,) his reputation for serious piety to have been great in the Christian world; and those who know the difference between holiness and mere morality will not be surprised at this. Augustine allows the genius and capacity of both these men to have been of the first order: and this testimony from him is decisive with me against that of Jerom, who treats the understanding and endowments of both with great contempt; but Jerom was not apt to allow any laudable qualities to an adversary.

Isidore of Pelusium applies to Pelagius that passage of Hosea: "grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." This author is understood thence to intimate, that he fell into this heresy in old age. It began to appear about the year 404 or 5. Chrysostom, writing to his friend, the deaconess Olympias, says, 'I am much grieved for Pelagius the monk; consider what crowns must be reserved for those who stand firm, when men who

have lived in so much mortification and continency, appear to be so carried away.' His first writings were an Epistle to Paulinus of Nola and other little works, in which his erroneous views of grace were so artfully expressed, and so guarded with cautious terms, that Augustine owns he was almost deceived by them. But when he saw the other writings of a later date, he discerned that he might artfully use the word grace, and by retaining the term, break the force of prejudice, and avoid offence, and yet conceal his meaning under a general ambiguity.

For, by a dexterity very common with heretics Pelagius, while he laid open to his converts the whole mystery of his doctrine, imparted only so much to others as might be more calculated to ensnare their affections than to inform them of his real opinions. He used to deliver his views under the modest appearance of queries, started against the doctrines of the church, and those as not invented by himself, but by others. The effect of poisoning the minds of men was, perhaps, more powerfully produced by this, than it would have been by a more direct and positive method. To this he added another artifice; he insinuated himself into the favour of women of some rank, of weak minds, and unacquainted with the spirit of the Gospel, those professing religion; and, by their means, he diffused his tenets with much success. Coelestius, more open and daring in speech, pursued a method not so replete with deceit, and was therefore exposed to detection more easily than his master.

Pelagius, having travelled over the monasteries of Egypt, settled at length at Rome, where his attempt to undermine the whole doctrine of divine grace by degrees, notwithstanding all his caution, gave umbrage to the church. Unguarded moments also will happen to the most artful, and at times discover them to the most unwary. A bishop, who was colleague of Augustine, mentioning to Priests

those words of the Confessions, 'Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt;' he contradicted with great vehemence, and expressed much indignation at the sentiment.

Rome being taken by the Goths about the year 410, numbers fled into Africa, and among the rest the two heresiarchs. Pelagius was received at Hippo, in Augustine's absence, where his stay was very short. The bishop of Hippo saw him once or twice at Carthage; but was himself very busy in settling a conference with the Donatists, and nothing material passed between them. Pelagius leaving Africa, passed over into Palestine: there his labours attracted the attention of Jerom, who lived a monastic life in the same country, and wrote against his opinions, justly calling on him to speak clearly what he meant, and complaining of his ambiguities.

In the mean time Coelestius in Africa more openly discovered his sentiments, and made such attempts to propagate them in Carthage itself, that he was summoned to appear before a synod, which was held by Aurelius, bishop of that city. He was accused of denying original sin; and when he was pressed with the custom of the church in baptizing infants, as a proof of her belief in all ages that infants needed redemption, he declared that they had no need of remission, and yet ought to be baptized, that they might be sanctified in Christ. Coelestius was condemned as a heretic in the year 412, and disappointed of his hopes of rising in the church; for he had either obtained, or was about to obtain, the office of a presbyter in Africa.

A fragment of the acts of this synod is preserved by Augustine, though he himself was not present at it, in which is the following passage: 'Aurelius said, Read what follows; and it was read: That the sin of Adam hurt himself alone, and not mankind. Coelestius said, I owned that I was dubious concerning the communication of sin by descent from

Adam (yet in such a manner, that I shall bow to the authority of those to whom God hath given the grace of superior skill); because I have heard different things from those who at least were presbyters in the church. Paulinus, a deacon, said, Name them. Coelestius answered, The holy presbyter Ruffinus at Rome: I heard him deny any communication of sin by descent. Being pressed, if he could name any more, he said, Is not one priest sufficient! On being asked, whether he had not asserted, that infants are born in a state in which Adam was before transgression, all that could be obtained from him was, That infants needed baptism, and ought to be baptized.'

Indeed Pelagianism itself seemed little more than a revival of Deism, or what is commonly called natural religion. Adam, it was said, would have died, whether he sinned or not. Men might be saved by the Law, as well as by the gospel: infants just born are in the same state as Adam before transgression. Men's death depends not on that of Adam, nor does their resurrection depend on that of Christ. These tenets were charged upon Coelestius, and condemned. In a book which he offered to the council, he owned that children were redeemed by Christ, and yet he would not confess that the effects of Adam's sin passed upon them. So inconsistent are men, bent on the support of error, and yet willing to appear in some measure Christian!

In the mean time Pelagius, in his manner, was still writing against the doctrines of the gospel: while Augustine, than whom no man was ever more cautious and deliberate in the whole controversy, answered in his writings the evil tendency of the Pelagian tenets, 'avoiding,' says he, 'the name of Pelagius, thinking that I might more easily profit him, if, preserving friendship, I should yet spare his modesty.' But more of this hereafter.

Coelestus, driven from Africa, fixed his seat at

Sicily, and by the questions which he there excited, gave occasion to Augustine to employ his pen in answering him. Nor did the heresy cease in Africa; the bishop of Hippo was employed not only in writing, but also in preaching against the new notions, and gave his testimony in a solemn manner from the pulpit at Carthage.

Pelagius himself wrote in the most respectful manner to Augustine, and in the highest terms extolled his character. It is certain, that the impressions made on Augustine's mind in favour of Pelagius were strong, and not easily erased, because he had been taught to believe him to be a person of great virtue. Nothing but the completest evidence of heresy could have induced him to make an open rupture. And a soul like his, humble and charitable in a high degree, would, I doubt not, long entertain the best hopes of a man whom he had once esteemed.

In the year 415, or nearly so, two well-disposed young men, Timasius and Jacob, meeting with Pelagius, were by him induced to enter on the monastic life, in the commendation of which all parties were but too strongly agreed. But they imbibed also his self-righteous doctrine, from which, however, by the labours of Augustine, they were afterwards delivered. On this occasion, they showed Augustine a book of Pelagius, in which he vehemently accused those who pleaded the faultiness of human nature as an excuse for their sins, and in which, while he seemed to be only inveighing against a licentious abuse of gospel grace, he evidently denied the existence of all grace, and maintained, that by that term were to be understood the natural endowments of the human mind, seasoned and directed by free-will; and these endowments, so seasoned and directed, he acknowledged to be the free gifts of God. The bishop of Hippo, with extreme reluctance, at length admitted the full con-

viction of the heretical character of Pelagius, and answered the book: yet he concealed his name, lest Pelagius, being offended, might become still more incurable. Augustine owns that he afterwards repented of this step, because he had probably increased the pride of the heretic, through an ill-judged fear of giving him pain.

For Pelagius, hearing of Augustine's proceedings, loudly complained, that some of his books had been stolen from him; and others reckoned as his, which were not so. It is difficult to deal with deceitful men; yet the African bishop used the most prudent method. He sent his own book and Pelagius's together to Innocent, of Rome, desiring him to mark the sentiments of each, 'and if he denies that these are his sentiments, I contend not; let him anathematize them, and in plain terms confess the doctrine of Christian grace. I have, says he, sufficient witnesses, men who have a great regard for him, who will attest that I had the book from them, and that it has not been falsified by me.' Innocent, in reply, condemned the book altogether, as containing horrible sentiments, hitherto unprecedented in the Christian world. How much more reputable would it be to the characters of many, like Pelagius, would they at once own what they are, and make no pretensions to the doctrines of grace! But this sincerity would not so effectually serve the cause of Satan in the world.

While Jerom in the east and Augustine in the west were opposing Pelagianism, the heresiarch himself was summoned to appear in the latter end of the same year 415, before a synod of fourteen bishops of Palestine, at Lydda, then called Diospolis. Here he had every advantage which an accused person could wish for. His two accusers, Heresius and Lazarus, bishops of Gaul, were absent, because one of them was sick at that time. The court was poorly acquainted with the Latin tongue, in which

the works of Pelagius were written, and John of Jerusalem, one of the principal bishops, was prejudiced in favour of Origenism, and of Pelagius. The eastern church itself was more corrupt in doctrine, and more inclined to support innovations than the western; and the heresiarch himself, in capacity, presence of mind, and circumspection, far exceeded all his judges.

Hence, by denying one charge, and by dexterously evading and explaining away all the rest, he obtained an honourable acquittal.

John, bishop of Jerusalem, defended Pelagius in the synod with great earnestness, and he was at last received as a Christian brother. Flushed with his victory, he prepared to improve the advantage which it gave him. Though he was acquitted, as holding the doctrines of grace, and not as inimical to them, he wrote to a friend, that fourteen bishops had agreed with him, that man might be without sin, and easily keep the commands of God, if he would; concealing at the same time his confession of the necessity of divine grace, by which he had eluded condemnation. With similar artifice, he transmitted an account to Augustine of his acquittal. He wrote also four books on free-will, in which he openly took away original sin, and gloried at the same time in the acts of the synod in Palestine.

A council being held the next year at Carthage, on various exigencies of the church, Orosius, returning from Palestine, brought them the letters of Heros and Lazarus against Pelagius. Though the acts of the eastern council had not yet reached this African synod, yet they had now sufficient information to alarm their minds. The council wrote to Innocent of Rome their plain sense of the controversy, which was—that unless Pelagius and his partizans in express terms rejected the sentiments ascribed to him, *they should be excommunicated, to prevent others from being imposed on by false pretensions.*

These equitable determinations were signed by sixty-eight bishops. Another synod of Numidian bishops, assembled at Milevum, wrote also to Rome to the same effect. Augustine also, his friend Alypius, now bishop of Tagasta, Aurelius of Carthage, and two other bishops, wrote letters in their own names to Innocent, more distinctly explaining the subject, and showing how the eastern council most probably had been imposed on by the subtilty of Pelagius; at the same time intimating their fear, lest Rome itself, where he had long lived, should be infected with the heresy. Innocent, in his answer, entered fully into the views of the Africans, and in the same conditional manner condemned the authors of the heresy. As it however still spread in a secret manner, it needed to be extirpated by argument. For this the bishop of Hippo was peculiarly qualified. And for more than twenty years he was employed in writing and preaching against the heresy.

The two heresiarchs now endeavoured to elude the force of the decrees against them. Coelestius, who had been in Asia for some time, and had obtained the office of presbyter, visited Rome in the year 412. He applied to Zozimus, the successor of Innocent, and recited his libel before him. And here, with an unlimited degree of complaisance, he submitted his sentiments implicitly to the bishop of Rome, professing a desire to be corrected by him, if as a man he erred in any point, and complained of the precipitation with which he had been condemned.

Zozimus, deceived by his artifices, wrote to the African prelates, complaining of the malice of the Gaulish bishops, and declaring, that unless within two months he heard more decisive proofs against Coelestius, he should consider him as a Christian brother. The African bishops, in reply, complained of the precipitation of Zozimus, and at length sent to Rome such complete proofs against Coelestius, that he withdrew himself from the examination.

avoided the means of a public detection. Zozimus however still delayed his condemnation, for which he is justly blamed by Augustine.

Pelagius, using the same methods which Coelestius did, wrote to Innocent, with whose death he was unacquainted. Some fragments of his letters are preserved by Augustine. A sample of them is as follows: 'Lo, let this epistle clear me before you, in which I say that we have a free-will to sin and not to sin, which in all good works is always helped by divine aid.' And 'this power we say is in all in general, in Christians, Jews, and Gentiles. In all there is free will equally by nature, but in Christians alone it is helped by grace. In others there is a good condition, naked and unarmed; in those who belong to Christ, it is fortified by his assistance. Persons therefore are to be condemned, who, when they have free-will, by which they might come to faith, and obtain the grace of God, abuse their liberty: but those are to be rewarded, who, using free-will aright, obtain the favour of God, and keep his commands.' He adds more to the same purpose, never once either admitting the doctrine of original sin, or defining what he means by divine assistance, which with him may mean no more than the benefit of external revelation, or the preservation of our natural powers. Had he once expressly declared, that he did not believe any real influence of divine grace on the mind, inclining it to what is good, which he knew the Christian world before his time believed, and which if he himself had believed, he would have expressed; there would have been an honesty in his heretical pravity, which would have entitled his character to a greater degree of respect. As the case stands, and, as he must have known that his opponent used the terms grace and divine assistance in a quite different sense from that in which he used them, he appears by his own words to have been an insincere disputant. He sent also to Rome a symbol of his faith,

written in the same style of ambiguity, and accompanied with the same adulatory strains to the bishop of Rome, which Coelestius had used on the like occasion.

Zozimus, to whom his letters came, was imposed on by them, as he had been by those of Coelestius; and he wrote to the African bishops, that he was convinced that Pelagius was innocent. The latter answered him very properly, that it was not sufficient for Pelagius and Coelestius to own in general that they approved of all that he approved of; that it behoved them expressly to confess, that we need the grace of Jesus Christ, not only to know, but also to do righteousness in every act. Thus they showed that they had, what Zozimus had not, a clear and accurate conception of the subject. But they had Augustine among them: whereas men whose consciences have had little exercise on these subjects, are seldom quick in comprehending them, nay, are apt to be imposed on by plausible terms, though they be in other respects men of enlarged and cultivated understandings.

Zozimus was, however, open to conviction. For the bishops of Rome who had not yet learned to be infallible. The instructions of Augustine corrected his mistakes, and being further acquainted with the subject by some writings of Pelagius, which were brought to him at Rome, he openly condemned the two heretics. Whether he had done so or not, there is not the slightest ground to believe, that the African bishops and churches would not have persevered by their own authority, in rejecting pelagianism. but the concurrence of the bishop of Rome was doubtless of great service to the general cause of Christian truth at this period.

The Emperor Honorius also passed the sentence of banishment from Rome on the Pelagians the same year in which their doctrines were condemned, *i. e.* is, the year 418. Coelestius retired to Constantinople.

where his tenets were opposed by Atticus the bishop, and his views of propagating them were disappointed. The party were, however, indefatigable; letters were written to the bishop of Thessalonica, in which they professed their desire to defend the Catholic faith against the heresy of the Manichees, and in that specious manner they vindicated their praises of the powers of human nature. Augustine answered their arguments, which had been sent by eighteen of the party to Thessalonica; Atticus also wrote against them to Rome, and the sect underwent a general condemnation.

Pelagius, who was still in Palestine, complained of the treatment which he had received, and being interrogated there concerning the disputed points by some persons of respectable characters, he answered with such subtile ambiguity, that he again imposed on his examiners, who explained to Augustine in writing the result. The latter, roused by repeated acts of dissimulation, wrote his treatise on Original Sin and the Grace of Christ, in which he detected and exposed the artifices of Pelagius. The wiles of the party were not yet exhausted: they charged the general church with condemning marriage, and the workmanship of God in the creation of man; I suppose maliciously deducing those consequences from the doctrine of original sin: and this drew another reply from the argumentative pen of Augustine.

Notwithstanding the emperor's sentence in 418, Coelestius ventured again to show himself in Rome, and about the year 420 was again expelled by an edict. Pelagianism being now reduced to the lowest ebb, Satan seems to have changed his mode of attacking the church, by inducing some ignorant persons, under a mistaken idea of honouring the doctrines of grace, to support opinions subversive of the free agency of man, and particularly to forbid men to rebuke sinners, and direct them only to pray

for their conversion. Augustine obviated these mistakes, and explained the consistency between the divine grace and human duty, in his treatise of Rebuke and Grace.

The two heresiarchs, after this, were reduced to a state which is of all others the most grating to proud minds, a state of obscurity. The island of Britain, it is certain, was afterwards disturbed with their doctrines, which, by the skill and authority of Germanus, whom we shall have occasion to mention hereafter, were confuted and overcome. Hence it is probable, that Pelagius, after having travelled through the Roman empire, and attempted in vain to overturn the doctrines of grace, retired to his native country. But nothing seems to be known further, either concerning him or Coelestius.

A few further particulars of the life and labours of Augustine remain to be added. The Manichees could not fail to attract a considerable portion of his attention; he had himself suffered extremely through their means; they abounded in Africa, and God abundantly blessed his labours in opposing their doctrines, and in recovering souls which had been seduced. One instance, to the honour of divine grace, deserves to be recorded in the very words of the writer. 'Not only I (Possidonius) who wrote this life, but also other brethren, who lived together with the bishop in Hippo, know that he once said to us, being at table together: 'Did you take notice of my sermon to-day in the church, that its beginning and end were not according to my custom; that I did not finish what I proposed, but left my subject in suspense?' We answered, we were at the time astonished, and now recollected it. 'I believe,' said he, 'the reason was, because the Lord, perhaps, intended some erroneous person in the congregation, through my forgetfulness and mistake, to be taught and healed; for in his hand are we and our discourses. For, while I was handling the points of

the question proposed, I was led into a digression, and so, without concluding or explaining the subject in hand, I terminated the argument rather against Manicheism, on which I had no design to have spoken a word, than concerning the matter proposed.' Next day, or two days after, so far as I can remember, came a merchant, called Firmus, and while Augustine was sitting in the monastery, in our presence, he threw himself at his feet, shedding tears, entreating his and our prayers, and confessing that he had lived many years a Manichee; that he had vainly spent much money in the support of that sect, and that, by the bishop's discourses, he had, through divine mercy, been lately convinced of his error, and restored to the church. Augustine and we inquired by what sermon in particular he had been convinced; he informed us; and as we all recollected the substance of that discourse, we admired, and were astonished at the profound counsel of God for the salvation of souls, and we glorified and blessed his holy name, who, when, whence, and as he pleases, by persons knowing and unknowing, works out the salvation of men. From that time the man, devoting himself to God, gave up his business, and improving in piety, was by the will of God compelled against his own will, in another region, to receive the office of presbyter, preserving still the same sanctity; and perhaps he is yet alive beyond sea.'

Augustine detected also the base and blasphemous practices of the Manichees, and thus guarded the minds of the unwary. One of them, by name Felix, coming to Hippo to sow his sentiments, Augustine held a public dispute with him in the church, and, after the second or third conference, Felix owned himself convinced, and received the gospel.

Arianism also being introduced into Africa, by the Goths, who professed it, engaged the attention of Augustine, and he exerted himself in a controversy with Maximinus their bishop.

Of his labours against Pelagianism it will not only be needful to say, that he lived to see the fruit of them in the growth of Christian purity, both in his own church and in other parts of Africa.

While he thus endeavoured to promote the cause of piety, he was always observed to bear, with much patience and meekness, the irregularities of the perverse, and to be more disposed to mourn over them with grief, than resent them with anger.

To the manifold labours of this bishop in preaching, visiting, and writing, was added the troublesome employment of hearing causes. For, according to the rules of 1 Cor vi. the Christians of Hippo used to bring matters of controversy before the bishop. And the examination and decision of these engaged him till the hour of repast, and sometimes he was employed in them fasting the whole day. Certainly it is not reasonable that a Christian pastor should be statedly employed in such things: but Augustine, following the customary practice of the time, made it subservient to the purest purposes. He had by this an opportunity of examining the dispositions of his people, and their improvements or defects in faith and good works; and he explained to them occasionally, their duties as Christians, by opening to them the word of God, by exhorting them to piety, and by rebuking sinners. And in all this he acted with perfect disinterestedness.

In attendance on councils he was frequent, and in them he distinguished himself in the defence both of Christian doctrine and discipline. In ordaining clergymen, he took care to follow the custom of the church, and to act with the concurrence of the majority of the people. His dress, furniture, and diet, were moderated between extremes; and it will deserve to be mentioned, as an instance of superiority to popular superstition, that he always drank wine but with great moderation. He constantly practised hospitality; and at table encouraged reading or

gument; and as his spirit, ever humble and tender since his conversion, could not bear the too fashionable mode of detraction and slander, he had a distich written on his table, which intimated, that whoever attacked the characters of the absent were to be excluded. Nor was he content with a formal declaration; he seriously warned his guests to abstain from defamation. ‘On one occasion,’ says his biographer, ‘some bishops, his intimate friends, breaking the rule in conversation, he at length was so much roused as to say, that either those lines must be erased from the table, or he himself would rise from the midst of the meal, and go into his bed-chamber; and of this I and others who were present are witnesses.’

He was conscientiously attentive to the wants of the poor, and sedulously relieved them out of the revenues of the church, or the oblations of the faithful. And, in answer to the invidious complaints of some, concerning the riches amassed by the church, he freely offered to give them up to any of the laity who would take the charge of them. Doubtless the growth of superstition was even then bringing on that accession of wealth to the clergy, which afterwards grew to so enormous a height. But purer hands than those of Augustine never handled the possessions of the church; he rather seems chargeable, even with inattention to his own rights; as he committed the whole of the temporals to his clergy in succession, and never made himself sufficiently acquainted with particulars to be able, from his own inspection, to correct any mismanagement. He himself lived perfectly unconnected with the world, at one table, and in one house, with his clergy, and never purchased house or land. He checked also the fashionable method of men’s leaving their possessions to the church, whenever he saw reason to think that the testators had near relations, who, in justice and equity, had a preferable claim.

With much pleasure did he withdraw, as soon as possible, from any secular cares which he had not been able to avoid, that he might give himself wholly to divine things. Hence he always remained as much as possible, content with old buildings and utensils, lest he should be entangled with concerns of this nature. Yet to relieve the indigent, and to redeem captives, he scrupled not to sell the vessels of the church, after the example of Ambrose.

A little before his death, he was employed in revising and correcting his works. This care produced the publication of his *Retractations*, the chief use of which book is, that it enables us to fix, with a considerable degree of precision, what were his genuine works and thoughts. It pleased God, however, not to suffer him to depart this life without a cloud of grievous affliction; and the relish of heaven after which for many years he had panted with uncommon ardour, was quickened still more by a bitter taste of the evils of this life in declining age.

Genseric, king of the Vandals, invaded Africa and made a dreadful desolation. To the tender mind of Augustine, the devastation of the country, the cruelties inflicted on the pastors, the desolation of churches, and the destruction of all church-order which ensued, must have been peculiarly afflicting. Count Boniface, one of the greatest Roman heroes of those times, undertook the defence of Hippo against the barbarians. He had not been without convictions of divine things, and Augustine, who was intimate with him, had endeavoured to improve those convictions to salutary purposes. But, to seek human glory, and the honour which cometh from God only, at the same time, was found to be incompatible. Boniface gained a shining reputation, and followed the world. In these trying times the bishop of Hippo again endeavoured to draw him from the love of the world to God, and Boniface seems along to have sinned reluctantly. What God must

do for him at last, during the time that he lived after the mortal wound, which he received in a duel, we know not. The man, however, was brave and sincere, and had a steady regard for men of real godliness. He defended Hippo for fourteen months, which, after that time, with all Africa, fell under the power of the Vandals.

But Augustine was taken away from the evil to come. While he mourned under the miseries of the times, in company with Possidonius and several bishops, who had fled for shelter to Hippo, he told them, that he had prayed, either that God would free them from the siege, or endue his servants with patience, or take him out of the world to himself. In the third month of the siege he was seized with a fever, which ended in his dissolution, in the year 430. He lived seventy-six years, forty of which he had been a presbyter or bishop. He used to say, that a Christian should never cease to repent, even to the hour of his death. He had David's penitential psalms inscribed on the wall, in his last sickness, and he read and wept abundantly; and for ten days before he expired he desired to be uninterrupted, that he might give himself wholly to devotion, except at certain intervals. He had preached the word of God constantly, till his last sickness. He left no will: he had neither money nor lands to leave. He left his library to the church. Of his own relations he had taken competent care before. 'In his writings,' says Possidonius, 'the holy man appears: but those who could have heard and seen him speak in public, and particularly in private conversation, would have seen still more.' Pity it is, that a man, who had known him for forty years, should have left us so imperfect an account. But the vigour of the human mind was then much declined, and superstition made men childish, though it did not destroy the spirit of piety.

II.—THE CHURCH IN THE WEST.

BEFORE we proceed to the general history of this century, it will be necessary to devote a short space to the celebrated Jerom. This renowned monk was born at Stridon, a town in the confines of Dalmatia and Pannonia, under the emperor Constantine, in the year 331. The place was obscure, and was rendered still more so by the desolations of the Goths. Nor is it a very clear case whether it ought to be looked on as part of Italy or not. That Jerom was of a liberal and opulent family, appears from the pains taken with his education, which was finished at Rome, that he might there acquire the graces of Latinity. He was in truth the most learned of the Roman fathers, and was eminent both for genius and industry. He was brought up in Christianity from infancy, and hence, like other good men, who have had the same advantages, he appears never to have known the extreme conflicts with indwelling sin which, to later converts, have given so much pain, and often have rendered them more eminently acquainted with vital religion.

After his baptism at Rome, he travelled into France, in company with Bonosus, a fellow-student. He examined libraries, and collected information from all quarters; and, returning into Italy, he determined to follow the profession of a monk—a term which did not, at that time, convey the modern idea of the word. In Jerom's time, it meant chiefly the life of a private recluse Christian, who yet was fostered by no certain rules nor vows, but acted according to his own pleasure. Such a life suited the disposition of a studious person like Jerom. He was, however, made a presbyter of the church, but never would proceed any further in ecclesiastical dignity. He spent four years in the deserts of Syria.

reading and studying with immense industry. A commentary on the prophet Obadiah, which he published, bore strong marks of juvenile indiscretion, as he afterwards frankly owned. And here, by the assistance of a Jew, who visited him, Nicodemus-like, in the evenings, lest he should give umbrage to his brethren, he acquired the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and with indefatigable labour he studied also the Chaldee and the Syriac.

On his return to Rome, he became intimate with Paula, the illustrious descendant of the Pauls, so famous in Roman story, with Marcella, and other opulent ladies. The monastic life, which had long flourished in the East, was only beginning to be fashionable in the West. The renowned Athanasius, and his Egyptian friends, rendered respectable, during their exile at Rome, by their sufferings for the faith, contributed to throw a dignity on such a course of life: and the zeal of Jerom nursed the same spirit among serious persons. The ladies I have mentioned, were hence induced to impart a celebrity to the monastic taste by their own example.

Spleen and calumny hastened the departure of Jerom from Rome. This great man had not learned to command his passions, and to disregard the breath of fame. Unjust aspersions on his character affected him with a very blameable acrimony. He retired again to the East: there several of his admirers followed him. He chose Bethlehem as the seat of his old age, where Paula erected four monasteries, three for the women over which she presided, and one for the men, in which Jerom lived the rest of his life, enjoying at times the society of his learned friends. He instructed the women also in theology, and Paula died, after having lived twenty years in the monastery.

I shall not spend any time in vindicating the chastity of Jerom, because his whole life was a sufficient answer to calumny in that respect. He was cer-

tainly serious in the very best sense of the word, and died in the 91st year of his age, in the year 420.

Yet it is to be lamented, that a man of so great sincerity, and of a mind so vigorous, should have been of so little service to mankind. The truth is, his knowledge of theology was contracted and low. He confessed, that while he macerated his body in the deserts, he was thinking of the pleasures and delights of Rome. He understood not the true gospel-mystery of mortifying sin, and, by his voluntary humility and neglect of the body, added to the fame and splendour of his voluminous but ill-digested learning, he contributed more than any other persons of antiquity to the growth of superstition.

Jerom was, however, humble before God, and truly pious: and of him it must be said, to the honour of Christian godliness, how much worse a man he would have been, had he not known Christ Jesus; and how much better, if he had known him with more clearness and perspicuity!

The works of a writer so superstitious, though sound in the essentials of Christianity, will not deserve a very particular review. Here and there a vigorous and evangelical sentiment breaks out amidst the clouds. His epistles discover him to have been sincere and heavenly-minded, though his temper was choleric.

It is time to take up the connected thread of history again. But the reader must not expect a successive detail of the proceedings of the Roman princes. After the death of Theodosius, the empire was torn by various convulsions, tending, in the West particularly, to its destruction. It is my duty to watch only the real church amidst these scenes; for she lived, while the secular glory of Rome was destroyed. Honorius, the son of Theodosius, reigned there, while his brother Arcadius governed at Constantinople.

Honorius, or to speak more properly, his ministers (for he himself was, like Arcadius, a very feeble

prince,) protected the external state of the church, and followed the steps of Theodosius in extirpating the remains of idolatry, and in supporting orthodoxy. against the Donatists, and all heretics. The superior advantages of a Christian above a Pagan establishment, even in times of such decline as those now before us, appear in the humanity of a number of laws and edicts, by which idolatrous impurities and savage games were abolished, and due care was taken of the needy and the miserable. In what, for instance, but in a Christian government, shall we find so humane a law as that of Honorius, enacted in the year 403, by which judges are directed to take prisoners out of prison every Sunday, and to inquire if they be provided with necessaries, and to see that they be properly accommodated in all things.

In this reign, Rome was sacked by the Goths ; and an opportunity was given for the exercise of many Christian virtues, by the sufferings to which its inhabitants were exposed.

Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, was one of the greatest ornaments of Gaul in this century. He was a person of quality, and exercised the profession of a counsellor in the former part of his life. Amator, his predecessor in the see, foresaw, however, I apprehend, some symptoms of grace in him, and ordained him deacon. A month after the decease of Amator, he was unanimously elected bishop by the clergy, nobility, citizens, and peasants, and was forced to accept the office notwithstanding the great reluctance which he discovered. He employed himself in the foundation of monasteries, and in enriching the church, while he impoverished himself ; and for thirty years, from his ordination to his death, he lived in extreme austerity.

About the year 430, that is, about the time of Augustine's death, he visited the island of Great Britain, with an intention to oppose Agricola, the son of a Pelagian bishop called Severinus, who pro-

pagated heresy among the churches there. Hence it is probable, that Pelagius, after he had ceased to be famous in the world, had retired into his native country, and there died. It is no wonder that his opinions should there find abettors. Lupus, bishop of Troyes, accompanied Germanus in the mission, which was undertaken on the recommendation of a numerous council in Gaul. Lupus governed his church fifty-two years, and was highly renowned for sanctity. These two bishops, on their arrival, preached not only in the churches, but also in the highways, and in the open country, and vast crowds attended their ministry. The Pelagians came to a conference, the doctrines of grace were debated; the bishops, supporting themselves by express passages of Scripture in the hearing of all the people, were allowed to be victorious, and Pelagianism was reduced to silence. At this time, the Picts, a race of barbarians who inhabited the north, and the Saxons, a German nation, called in by the Britons, as it is well known, to assist them against the Picts, united their forces against the natives. The latter, terrified at the approach of the enemy, had recourse to Germanus and Lupus. Many, having been instructed by them, desired baptism; and a great part of the army received it at Easter, in a church which they made of boughs of trees twisted together. The festival being over, they marched against the enemy, with Germanus at their head. He, still remembering the profession in which he had spent great part of his youth, posted his men in a valley through which the enemy were to pass, surprised and defeated them. After these things the two bishops returned to the Continent. The deacon Palladius being ordained bishop of Scotland, arrived there in the year 431. Scotland had never before seen a bishop, and was in a state of extreme barbarism.

The same year died Paulinus of Nola, who had been bishop there twenty years. He was the

timate friend of Augustine, and appears, through the midst of superstition which clouds his narrative, to have been one of the best Christians of his age. He was a mirror of piety, liberality and humility, worthy of a more intelligent age, and of more intelligent writers than those who have recorded his life. For I choose to dismiss him with this general character, rather than to tarnish his memory with repeating the romances of those who meant to honour him.

We have seen how the doctrines of grace were defended in Britain, and it is not to be doubted but this was done with some saving efficacy. In Gaul, the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism still maintained its ground, and Prosper and Hilary, who had written an account of it to Augustine, exerted themselves in defending the doctrines which he had taught.

Palladius, the pastor of Scotland, being dead, Coelestine sent Patrick into the same parts in his stead. He was born in Scotland, at a place now called Dumbarton. Having been carried captive into Ireland, and having remained there a few years, in which time he learnt the language and customs of the country, he was by some pirates afterwards conveyed into Gaul; and after various adventures he returned a volunteer into Ireland, with a view to undertake the conversion of the barbarous natives, who seem, till this time, to have been without any acquaintance with Christianity. It is delightful to observe the motions of Providence, in causing the confusions of war and desolation to be subservient to the propagation of the Gospel. Patrick, intent only on the cause of Christ, amidst all the various scenes in which he was tossed to and fro, was not discouraged by the ill success which at first attended his labours. The barbarous Irish refused to hear him, and he returned into Gaul, and spent some time with *Germanus of Auxerre*, whose services in Britain have been mentioned. The conversation and exam-

ple of Germanus inflamed his mind with fresh zeal, and by his advice he went to Rome, that he might be strengthened in his pious views by the authority of Coelestine. From this bishop he received such support and assistance as enabled him to revisit Ireland; and at length his success was so great, that to this day he is looked on as the apostle of Ireland. He first taught the Irish the use of letters; and while we pass over in silence the fictions of which these ages are full, there is no reason to doubt but that he was the instrument of real good to the Irish, both with respect to this life and the next; nor ought such events to be omitted in the History of the Church of Christ. It were only to be wished, that we knew them more circumstantially. He died about the year 460, in an advanced age.

About the year 439, Genseric, king of the Vandals, surprised Carthage in the midst of peace, and used his victory with great cruelty. He himself was an Arian by profession, as the barbarous nations who had received Christianity generally were. How this happened, we have seen before. It does not appear that the Arians were altered in their dispositions. The same unprincipled wickedness, which had ever characterized that party, remained. Genseric showed the greatest malice against the clergy, drove a number of them from their churches, and martyred many. Indeed the abominations of the times seemed to call for such a scourge. The light of divine grace revived in the West, purified many souls, and fired them for sufferings; but with the majority, both superstition and practical wickedness increased. Carthage itself was sunk in vice; lewdness was amazingly predominant. So deplorable a thing is it for men to depart from the simplicity of Christian faith. The superstitions now increasing daily, only fortified them the more in self-righteousness; and natural depravity, while grace was neglected, grew to an enormous height. Oppression and cruelty domi-

neered at Carthage; and the poor of the place, in the anguish of their misery, were induced to beseech God to deliver the city to the Barbarians.

Genseric expelled the bishops from their sees; and in case of any resistance, he made them slaves for life; which punishment was actually inflicted on several bishops, and on many laymen of quality. The bishop of Carthage, and a number of clergy, were expelled, and they fled by sea to Naples. Others having suffered divers torments in Africa, were put on board an old bark, and landed in Campania. Arian bishops were now put into possession of the vacant Sees. Some bishops, who still remained in the provinces, presented themselves before Genseric, and entreated, that as they had lost their churches and their wealth, they might at least be allowed to remain without molestation in Africa, for the comfort and support of the people of God. "I have resolved to leave none of your name or nation," was the reply of the stern Barbarian; and it was with difficulty that he was withheld by the entreaties of those about him, from ordering them to be thrown into the sea.

Germanus of Auxerre was called a second time into Great Britain, to assist the church against the Pelagian heresy, which again spread itself there. He set out in the year 446, and baffled the attempts of those who disturbed the faith of the church. The authority of this person was exceedingly great in these times, and it must be confessed that he employed it to the best purposes, the propagation of Christian doctrine, and the benefit of human society. But I am inclined neither to credit nor to relate his miracles; and I am sorry that I have little else to tell the reader concerning him. He died in the year 448, having held the see of Auxerre thirty years.

After a long vacancy, Deogratius was ordained bishop of Carthage in the year 454, at the desire of Valentinian, the Roman emperor, and, as it seems, by the connivance at least of Genseric. The captives

of the latter were divided among his followers, who separated husbands from wives, and children from parents. The heart of Deogratius was moved with compassion; and to prevent these orders, he undertook to redeem the captives by the sale of all the vessels of gold and silver belonging to the churches. As there were no places large enough to contain the multitude, he placed them in two great churches, which he furnished with beds and straw, giving order for their daily accommodation with all necessaries. He appointed physicians to attend the sick, and had nourishment distributed to them in his presence by their directions. In the night he visited all the beds, giving himself up to this work, notwithstanding his age and infirmities. He lived only three years in his bishopric, was endeared to the memory of the faithful by his virtues; and while Arians performed military exploits, and dealt in blood, this follower of Augustine honoured the real doctrines of the gospel by acts of meekness and charity. It is thus that we still trace the real church of Christ, and see the connexion of principles and practice in the disciples of the Lamb. The sight of so much goodness was too much for Genseric; he took care to suffer no more such bishops, and, in process of time, the orthodox bishops in Africa were reduced to three.

Genseric afterwards ordered the great church of Carthage to be shut up, and banished the ministers: and wherever his arms prevailed, he made the people of God to feel his fury. The whole empire of the west, indeed, was falling into ruin. Odoacer, king of the Heruli, made himself master of Rome in the year 476, and though he was afterwards obliged to give way to the victorious arms of Theodoric the Goth, yet Roman emperors have ceased in Italy ever since. Africa, we have seen, bowed under the yoke of the Vandals; Spain, and a great part of Gaul, was held in subjection by the Goths; the other part of Gaul was subjugated by the Franks, who, in process

of time, became masters of the whole country, which from them bears the name of France; and the southern part of Great Britain was overpowered at length by the Saxons. These were idolaters, and the small remains of the ancient Britons, Christians by profession, retired into the inaccessible mountains of Wales. The poverty of the northern parts of the island was their security. And we must be content to leave the fruits of the labours of Germanus, Palladius, and Patrick, in a very low state, at this period of the history. The Franks also were at present idolaters; the barbarians, who ruled in the other parts, were Arians, though it does not appear that any of them persecuted the faithful with so much rage as the Vandals did. Evavic, king of the Goths in Spain, seemed ambitious to tread in the steps of Genseric: he forbid the ordination of bishops in the room of those who were deceased, and sent others into banishment. The churches fell into decay, and congregations seldom assembled. Indeed it was a very gloomy season with the western church in general. The wrath of God was evidently poured out on the churches for mercies long abused; but there were those who, by the principles of divine grace, were enabled in patience to possess their souls, and to evidence that the real church was far from being extinguished.

About the year 496, Clovis, king of the Franks, was baptized, and received in the general church. He himself, perfidious, ambitious, and cruel, was no honour to any religious denomination. But some remarkable circumstances of providence attended his reception of Christianity; which will therefore deserve a place in these memoirs. The Franks, or French, were a German nation known long before, who dwelt about the lower Rhine. Having passed this river, they entered into Gaul, under the conduct of Pharamond, their first king, about the year 420. Clorio, Merovæus, Childeric, and Clovis, reigned in

succession after him. Like the rest of the barbarous nations, who desolated the lower empire, they still advanced gradually in conquests, and Clovis ruined the Roman empire entirely in Gaul. But he had to contend with other barbarous invaders, all of whom, however, he subdued at length, and by much carnage and violence he became the founder of the French monarchy. Wicked as he was, he was fitted to become an useful instrument of providence, like Henry VIII. of England, many years after. He had married Clotilda, niece of Gondebaud, king of the Burgundians; she was zealous for the doctrine of the Trinity, though both her uncle and the whole nation of the Burgundians professed Arianism. Could her private history be known, it would probably be instructive and edifying. For what could induce a royal lady, brought up among heretics and given in marriage to a powerful pagan, to persevere alone so firmly in the apostolical faith, but the grace of God and the effectual operation of his Spirit, in an age when divine truth had scarce a single patron of great power in Europe?

Having a son by her husband Clovis, she endeavoured to persuade him to permit the child to be baptized, and earnestly reasoned with him on the vanity of his idols, and preached Christianity to him with much sincerity. Clovis, who, it seems, had great affection for his queen, consented at length to the baptism of the infant; but he died a few days after. Clovis in a rage declared, 'I have lost my child, because he had been devoted to your deities: had he been devoted to mine, he would have lived.' The pious queen answered, 'I thank God, who has thought me worthy to bear a child, whom he has called into his kingdom.' She had afterwards another son, who was baptized by the name of Clothemer. On his falling sick, the king said 'Yes, I see he will die like his brother, because he has been baptized in the name of your Christ.' The mother

prayed for his recovery, and the child was restored to health. Clotilda, persevering in her exhortations Clovis heard them, patient, but still inflexible. It pleased God at length to give him a striking lesson, from which he ought to have learned the true art of happiness. Fighting with the Alemanni, he was upon the point of being entirely defeated. Finding himself in the utmost danger, he lifted up his eyes to heaven with tears and said, 'O Jesus Christ! whom Clotilda affirms to be the Son of the living God, I implore thy aid. If thou givest me victory, I will believe and be baptized; for I have called upon my own gods in vain.' While he was speaking, the Alemanni turned their backs, and began to flee, and at length submitted and craved quarter.

Penetrated with a sense of divine goodness, as many wicked men have been for a time, Clovis submitted to the instructions of Remi, bishop of Rheims, whom the queen sent to teach him. The chief difficulty he started was, that his people would not follow him in his change of religion. This was obviated by the facility with which they received Remi's lessons. What the lessons were, and what exercises of mind and conscience attended the change, we know not; the external circumstances and forms alone we are informed of, and they are not very instructive. The king himself was baptized at Rheims, and so was his sister, and three thousand of his army. He was at that time the only prince who professed orthodox Christianity. Anastasius, the eastern emperor, favoured heresy; the rest of the European princes were Arians. Thus a woman was employed as the instrument of a change in her husband; it is true the change was only nominal, but it was followed by very signal effects in Europe, namely, by the recovery of the apostolical faith, and no doubt by the happy conversion of many individuals.

III.—THE EASTERN CHURCH IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

THE vices which tarnished the west, were superstition, polemical subtilty, and monasticism. These same vices, meeting with little or no check from the revival which took place in Africa and spread a benign influence through the Latin churches, prevailed in the East almost universally, and each of them in a much higher degree; yet here and there, the Spirit of God condescended to move amidst the chaos, and it is our duty to watch and discern his operations.

Arsaces, who was very old, and who had been appointed bishop of Constantinople in the room of Chrysostom, died in the year 405. In the next year Atticus, who had been a principal agent in the persecution of Chrysostom, succeeded him. He seems a person extremely well adapted to an age and metropolis of formal and decent religion, neither so zealous as to give offence by his animadversions, nor so dissolute as to excite disgust by his immoralities. He understood mankind, had good sense; and though he had little learning, yet he possessed the art of showing off that little to the best advantage. So exquisite a courtier as he, would naturally gain over large numbers of the discontented; yet there were some, who chose rather to meet for worship in the open fields than to communicate with Atticus. This bishop used to compose sermons, which he recited from memory; at length he ventured to preach extempore, but he was not admired in the pulpit.

During the reign of Theodosius the younger, the son and successor of Arcadius, the Christians in Persia were persecuted grievously, says Theodoret; were kindly protected, and allowed to propagate the gospel there, says Socrates. Maruthas, bishop of Mesopotamia, acquired the favour of the Persian monarch, and, notwithstanding the fraudulent and

the Magi, almost persuaded him to be a Christian. But toward the end of his reign, a bishop, called Audas, presuming probably on the royal favour, destroyed one of the temples, where the Persians adored the fire. The action was no less contrary to Christian meekness, than to moral prudence, and deserves to be noticed, as a warning to Christians in all ages, to unite the subtilty of the serpent with the innocence of the dove. Isdegerdes, on the complaint of the Magi, who only wanted such an advantage, sent for Audas, and in soft terms complained of the injury, and ordered him to rebuild the temple. Audas refused to comply, and Isdegerdes in a rage ordered all the Christian churches in his dominions to be destroyed. He had not himself any real degree of Christian light, to enable him to make allowances for the misconduct of an individual. Nor did it ever appear more plainly how unequally the church of Christ contends with the world, since the mistake of one person laid the foundation of a cruel persecution of thirty years. Isdegerdes began it; and his son and successor Vararanes, inflamed by the Magi, afflicted the Christians with outrageous barbarity.

The Magi procured orders to be issued out to the chiefs of the Saracens, subjects of Persia, to guard the roads, and to apprehend all Christians, that they might not fly to the Romans. Aspebetes, one of those chiefs, touched with compassion at their distress, on the contrary, assisted them in making their escape. Being accused of this at the court of Persia, he fled with his family to the Romans. He took along with him a number of Arabs, who, together with himself, received Christian baptism, and the real church of Christ probably received an accession from this event.

The afflicted Christians implored the aid of Theodosius, and their entreaties were seconded by the humanity of Atticus, the bishop. In the mean time, the Persian king sent to demand that the Christian

fugitives should be delivered into his hands. To this the emperor would not consent, and a war was the consequence, in which, so far at least as Christianity is concerned, Theodosius had the advantage. An action of Acacius, bishop of Amida, on the frontiers of Persia, in the course of this war, deserves more praise than any military exploits whatever. The Romans had taken seven thousand prisoners, whom they would not restore, and who were perishing by famine. The Persian king was much vexed at this, but knew not how to relieve them. Acacius, touched with the distress of the captives, assembled his clergy, and spake thus to them: 'Our God has no need either of dishes or cups; since, then, our church has many gold and silver vessels from the liberality of the people, let us, by means of them, free and relieve these captive soldiers.' In effect, he ordered the vessels to be melted down, paid the ransom of the Persians to the Roman soldiers, gave the captives provisions and necessaries for their journey, and sent them home to their king. This was to conquer in a Christian manner. The king desired personally to make his grateful acknowledgments to the bishop, who was accordingly directed by Theodosius to wait upon the monarch.

Theodosius had a reign of uncommon length, forty-one years, though he died at the age of forty-nine. He was a feeble prince, and held the affairs of government with a remiss and negligent hand. The public, however, was benefited by the vigorous wisdom of his sister Pulcheria, who, though only two years older, maintained, by meekness and discretion, that ascendancy over him, which superior capacity always gives. I have no great matter before me concerning the real church of Christ at present; and I am not disposed to add one more history, to the many already published, concerning superstitious and marvellous acts, the fame of which now abounded, especially in the East. Let us look, then, at the

court of Constantinople a little, and see if we cannot discern some dim traces at least of the features of the church.

Pulcheria devoted herself to a life of virginity, before she was quite fifteen, and persuaded her two sisters to do the same. At sixteen she took the title of Augusta, and as she had always the prudence to preserve her brother's honour, she governed in his name with much success; for she was the only descendant of the great and first Theodosius, who possessed any eminence of character. She accustomed her brother to pray frequently, to honour the ministers, and to be upon his guard against novelties in religion. He had the honour of completing the destruction of idolatrous temples and worship.

But, notwithstanding all the encomiums lavished on this emperor, who appears to have truly feared God in the main, it is evident, that the powers of his mind partook of the childish imbecility of his age. A monk, to whom he had refused a favour, had the boldness to excommunicate him. Theodosius was so much affected, that he declared he would not touch a morsel, till the excommunication was removed. Though informed by the bishop of Constantinople, that he must not regard so irregular an excommunication, he could not be easy, till the monk was found, and had restored him to communion.

Two controversies shook the churches of the East in this reign, on which far more has been written than tends to edification. The first was the Nestorian, which was occasioned by the obstinacy of Nestorius, in objecting to a common phrase of the orthodox, namely, "Mary the mother of God." He seems to have regarded the union between the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ rather as moral than real, and to have preferred the idea of a connexion between the two natures to an union. As the last century had been remarkable for heresies raised on the denial of the union of the three Persons in the

Trinity, so this was disturbed by heresies raised on the denial of the union of the divinity and humanity of the Son of God. Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, the opposer of Nestorius, seems on the whole, to have expressed no more than the faith of the primitive church. But the serpentine wits of the east, favoured also by a language of exquisite subtilty and copiousness, found no end in cavilling. Eutyches, the monk, raised a second heresy, which denied the existence of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ. This extreme is opposite to that of Nestorius.

CENTURY VI.

I.—FULGENTIUS, AND THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN HIS TIME.

IN the year 495, a storm began again to lower over the African churches. Thrasamond, whose reign then commenced, an obstinate but crafty adherent of Arianism, mingled the arts of gentleness and severity against them. On the one hand he strove to gain over the orthodox by lucrative motives, on the other he forbade the ordination of bishops in the vacant churches. Eugenius, whose faithfulness was so severely tried in the former persecution, had been called to sleep in Jesus before the commencement of this. The African bishops showed, however, that divine grace had not forsaken them. They determined unanimously not to obey an order, which threatened the extinction of orthodoxy. They ordained bishops, and filled the vacant sees, though they foresaw the probability of Thrasamond's resentment. But they thought it their duty to take care of their flocks at this hazard, rather than to seem to consent to the king's unrighteous prohibitions. Thrasamond, enraged, determined to banish them all. Fulgentius about that time was chosen bishop of Ruspæ. He was descended from a noble family in Carthage, where his father was a senator. His

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mother being early left a widow, gave her son a very liberal education, for which Constantinople afforded at that time peculiar advantages; and thus his mind became stored with Greek and Roman learning. As he increased in religious seriousness, he inclined more and more to a monastic life, for which he gradually prepared himself by successive austerities in Africa, the country of his father, to which he returned with his mother. He was received into the monastery of Faustus, a bishop whom the Arian persecution had banished from his diocese to a place contiguous to it, where he erected his monastery. The spirit and fashion of the times so transported him, that, at first, he refused even to see his own mother who came to visit him, though he afterwards behaved to her with the greatest filial duty. He underwent severe bodily sufferings from the renewal of the Arian persecution. He was beaten with clubs so cruelly, that he confessed afterwards he scarcely found himself capable of enduring the pain any longer, and was glad to induce his tormentors by some conversation to allow an interval to his afflictions. For he seems to have been of a weak and delicate constitution, and the softness of his early education rendered him unfit to bear much hardship. His mind, however, appears to have been serene and faithful to his Saviour, whom, in real humility and sincerity, though tarnished with the superstitions of the times, he served according to the fundamentals of the gospel. The Arian bishop of Carthage, who had known Fulgentius, and esteemed his character, highly disapproved of this treatment, which he had received from a presbyter of his own religion and diocese, and told the injured youth, that, if he would make a formal complaint before him, he would avenge his cause. Many advising him to do so, he said, 'it is not lawful,' said Fulgentius, 'for a Christian to seek revenge. The Lord knows how to defend his servants. Should the presbyter through me be per-

ished, I shall lose the reward of my patience with God, and the more so, as it would give an occasion of stumbling to the weak, to see an Arian punished by a monk.' By and by he retired into the more interior parts of Africa. Some time after he sailed to Syracuse, and then visited Rome, and saw there king Theodoric in the midst of a magnificent assembly. If men in this life, seeking vanity, attain such dignity, what will be the glory of saints who seek true honour in the new Jerusalem?—this was the reflection of Fulgentius. Ruspæ in Africa was the place to which, much against his will, he was at length elected bishop: but this exaltation lessened not the severity of his way of life: and by the Arian persecution he was banished into Sardinia, in company with other faithful witnesses of orthodoxy. Upwards of sixty bishops were with him in exile. Thrasamond exerted himself mightily in overcoming the constancy of the orthodox, and delighted to ensnare them with captious questions. Fulgentius was sent for by him to Carthage, and by his skill in argument, and his readiness in answering questions, excited the king's admiration—till through the advice of his Arian clergy, who looked on the presence of Fulgentius as dangerous at Carthage, he was remanded to Sardinia. Soon after, Hilderic, the successor of Thrasamond, in the year 523, favouring the orthodox, put a total end to the persecution, and Ruspæ once more beheld her bishop.

He lived among his flock from this time to his death, eminent in piety, humility, and charity. For near seventy days he suffered extreme pains in his last sickness—"Lord, give patience here, and rest hereafter," was his constant prayer—and he died at length, as he had lived, an edifying example of every Christian virtue.

In the beginning of this century, Alaric king of the Visigoths reigned at Toulouse, and was sovereign of a kingdom on the confines of France and Spain;

though afterwards the Visigoths, by the victorious arms of the Franks, were confined to the latter country. Most of his subjects were of the general church, and he himself was an Arian; yet he treated them with great humanity, and gave leave to the bishops of his kingdom to meet together at the city of Agda. Twenty-four bishops assembled, the president of whom was Cæsarius, bishop of Arles. They made a number of canons, relating to discipline, two or three particulars of which may be mentioned. 'All clergymen who serve the church faithfully shall receive salaries proportionable to their services.' This rule, so simple and general, was the ancient provision for the maintenance of pastors. But, by another canon of this council, clergymen are allowed, provided they have the bishop's leave, to reserve to themselves the revenues of the church, saving its rights, but without the power of giving away or alienating any part; and here is the origin of benefices. 'In all churches the creed shall be explained to the competent on the same day, a week before Easter. All such laymen as shall not receive the communion three times a year, at the three great festivals, shall be looked on as heathens. Oratories may be allowed in the country to those who live at a great distance from the parish churches, for the ease and convenience of their families; but they must appear at their parish churches on certain solemn festivals.' This last rule showed at once a regard for parochial order, and for the instruction of the people. The next is equally laudable: 'Laymen are ordered to remain in the church till the blessing is pronounced.' Cæsarius was very zealous against the abuses meant to be rectified by this canon. He observed one day some persons going out of the church to avoid hearing the sermon: 'What are you about, my children?' cried he with a loud voice, 'Where are you going? Stay, stay, for the good of your souls. At the day of judgment it will be too late to exhort you.'

This just and charitable zeal prevailed at length : but he was often obliged to cause the church doors to be shut, after the Gospel was read, to prevent this indecent practice. His people were however reclaimed, and they repented by degrees. There are still extant two of his sermons on this subject. Mankind in all ages are apt to be weary of God's word ; there were, however, pastors in the western church, who served for charity, and not for lucre. Another canon deserves to be mentioned. It forbade auguries, and divinations, and the opening of the Scriptures with a view to make an omen of the first words that offered. We have seen that Augustine had opposed this last-mentioned superstition. Here it was forbidden under penalty of excommunication. Yet it still prevailed. I see the African schools, virtuously but unsuccessfully, struggling against the increasing darkness and superstition.

Cæsius had spent some part of his youth in the famous monastery of Lerins. Hearing afterwards that he was actually designed to be made bishop of Arles, he had hid himself among the tombs. But he was taken out thence, at the age of thirty, was appointed bishop, and continued in that church above forty years.

This holy man gave himself entirely to reading and preaching. He preached on all Sundays and holidays. If he was himself hindered from preaching, he caused his own sermons, or those of Augustine, whom he highly revered, or those of Ambrose, to be read by other ministers. His style was plain, and adapted to common capacities. He entered into practical particulars, searched the consciences of his hearers, and severely reproved idolatrous and superstitious usages.

In the mean time the cause of Arianism was gradually declining, partly by the progress of the Franks, and partly by the influence of Sigismund, king of Burgundy, who succeeded his father Gondebaud,

having been brought over to orthodoxy by Avitus, bishop of Vienne, a year before.

Sigismund, king of the Burgundians, having been induced, by the calumny of his second wife, to put to death his son Sigeric, and finding afterwards his error, repented in great bitterness, and besought God to punish him in this life, and not in the next. His prayer seems to have been heard ; for, in the year 523, he was attacked by Clodomir, king of the Franks, the successor of Clovis, and was afterwards slain with his wife and children. Clodomir himself was soon after slain in Burgundy, and his three sons were brought up by Clotilda, the widow of Clovis, their grandmother.

Such was the state of the church of Christ in France during the former part of this century. In Italy, some degree of genuine piety may be presumed to have still existed, though I have no interesting particulars to record. If we turn our eyes to the east, the prospect is far more disagreeable. Factions and feuds, heretical perversions, and scandalous enormities fill up the scene. Under the emperor Justin, Christianity began at length to wear a more agreeable aspect in some respects, and peace and good order, in external things at least, were in a measure restored. In the year 522, Zannaxes, king of the Lazi, a people who inhabited the country anciently called Colchis, being dead, his son Zathes repaired to Constantinople, telling the emperor that he was desirous of receiving the gospel, and of relinquishing the idolatry of his ancestors. They had been vassals to the king of Persia, and had been obliged to perform sacrifices after the Persian mode. He put himself therefore under the protection of Justin, and desired to receive the crown from his hands. Justin granted his requests, and thus the Lazi became vassals to the eastern empire, and embraced Christianity. The Iberians, who bordered on their territories, and were also subjects to the king of

Persia, had already received the gospel. How far any thing of the real spirit of Christ's religion was imbibed by either nation, I know not. I can only say, the limits of the Christian name were extended in the east.

In Arabia Felix there were many Christians subject to a king called Dounouas, a Jew, who caused those who were unwilling to become Jews to be cast into pits full of fire. In the year 522 he besieged Negra, a town inhabited by Christians. Having persuaded them to surrender by capitulation, he broke his oath, burnt the pastors, and beheaded the laymen, and carried all the youth into captivity. Here then the real church of Christ may be traced by sufferings voluntarily undergone for his sake. The next year, Elesbaan, king of Abyssinia, a country which, as we have formerly seen, had been Christian since the days of Athanasius, supported by the emperor Justin, invaded the territories of the Arabian Jew, subdued his country and slew him. Thus the Arabian Christians were relieved. Elesbaan himself was very zealous, and gave this proof of his zeal, that he resigned his crown to embrace the monastic life.

II.—THE STATE OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF JUSTINIAN.

ON the death of Justin, surnamed the Thracian, his nephew Justinian succeeded him at Constantinople, in the year 527. He was then forty-five years old, and reigned thirty-nine. I scarcely know any prince, whose real and ostensible character were so different. To judge by external things, he would appear one of the wisest, the most pious, and the most prosperous of men. He re-united Africa and Italy to the Roman empire: he is to this day famous for his code of laws; he was temperate and abstemious in private life, and was incessantly employed in religious acts

and ceremonies; he honoured monks and persons reputed holy, built sumptuous churches, endowed monasteries, was liberal beyond measure in the support of the externals of religion, was incessant in the encouragement of orthodoxy, at least of that which to him appeared to be so; indefatigable through the course of a long life in public affairs; seems scarcely to have ever unbended himself in any recreations, spent much time in religious speculations, rooted out idolatry from its obscure corners, and brought over a number of barbarous kings and nations to the profession of Christianity. What a character, if his heart had been right! His understanding and capacity indeed have been called into question; but I think unjustly. No weak man could have done half of what he did. He must have been a person of superior talents, and of very vigorous and strong faculties. But so far as appears from his conduct, he was, in religion, altogether the slave of superstition, and in morality the slave of avarice. For gold he sold his whole empire to those who governed the provinces, to the collectors of tributes, and to those who are wont to frame plots against men under any pretences. He encouraged the vilest characters in their detestable and infamous calumnies, in order to partake of their gains. He did also innumerable pious actions, says Evagrius, and such as are well pleasing to God, provided the doers perform them with such goods as their own property, and offer their pure actions as a sacrifice to God. In this emperor, then, it may be seen more eminently what a poor thing the body of Christian religion is without the spirit. Whatever benefit the church might, in some cases, derive from his administration, particularly in what relates to the extension of its pale, this is to be ascribed to the adorable providence of God, bringing good out of evil. On the other hand the evil he wrought was palpable. Dissensions and schisms, forced contro-

sions attended with cruelties, which alienated men's minds still more from godliness, the growth of superstition and formality, the miserable declension of real internal godliness,—especially through the east, where his influence was most extensive,—and the increase of ignorance and practical wickedness, were the undoubted consequences of Justinian's schemes.

In truth this man attempted too much: he pressed uniformity of doctrine through the world by imperial menaces and arms; he laboured to bring all nations into a nominal attachment to Christianity; he prescribed what bishops and laity should believe, and was himself, in effect, the pope as well as the emperor of the Roman world; yet, wretched being! he seems not to have known any one thing in religion in a right manner. In external things he could not but sometimes be right; in internal religion it was hardly possible he should be so; for he was ignorant of his own heart, while his eyes and ears were intent with insatiable curiosity on all persons and objects.

In the year 529, a council, memorable for its evangelical spirit, was held at Orange in France. Cæsarius was its head. He had, as I observed, tasted the doctrine of Augustine concerning grace, and was therefore zealous for its propagation. We may reasonably suppose the articles of this council to have been framed in opposition to the attempts made in France in favour of Semi-Pelagianism, as well as to give testimony to the grace of the gospel. Thirteen bishops were present, and we have a pleasing spectacle of the work of the divine Spirit flourishing in a considerable degree in France, particularly in the parts about Orange, and in the vicinity of the Rhone. 'Adam's sin,' says the council, 'did not only hurt the body, but the soul; it descended to his posterity: the grace of God is not given to men because they call upon him, but that grace is the cause that men do call upon him: the being cleansed from sin, and

the beginning of our faith, is not owing to ourselves, but to grace. We are not able by our own natural strength to do or think any thing which may conduce to our salvation. We believe that Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the other fathers, had not by nature that faith that St. Paul commendeth in them, but by grace.' To clear the Almighty of being the author of sin, they add however, 'that some may be predestinated to evil, we not only disbelieve, but detest those who think so.'

These words express in substance the sentiments of these holy men. But to enable the reader to judge more precisely for himself what they were, I shall give him two passages from the fifth and seventh canons, translated at length from the Latin original. 'If any one say, that the beginning or increase of faith, and the very affection of belief is in us, not by the gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit correcting our will from infidelity to faith, from impiety to piety, but, by nature, he is an enemy to the doctrine of the apostles.' 'If any man affirm that he can, by the vigour of nature, think any thing good which pertains to salvation as he ought, or choose, or consent to the saving, that is to evangelical preaching, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all the sweet relish in consenting to and believing the truth, he is deceived by an heretical spirit.'

In the same year a council was held also at Vaison, at which were present twelve bishops, of whom Caesarius was one. They decreed, according to the custom observed in Italy, that all country priests should receive into their houses young men, who might be readers in the church, that they should educate them with a paternal regard, causing them to learn the psalms, to read the scriptures and to be acquainted with the word of God; and in this way should provide themselves with worthy successors. For the convenience of the people, the pastors were

allowed to preach not only in the cities, but in all the country parishes.

Hilderic, king of the Vandals in Africa, having been deposed by Gilimer, Justinian, by his renowned general Belisarius, recovered the country from the barbarians, and reunited it to the empire. This put an end to the dominion of Arianism in that region. The orthodox were reinstated; two hundred and seventeen bishops held a council at Carthage; Arians and Donatists were forbidden to hold assemblies, and the lands which had been taken from the Arians were restored by an edict of Justinian in the year 535. The face of true religion was recovered in this country; its spirit I cannot find. The best symptom was the extension of Christianity among the Moors, by the zealous care of Justinian. How far any cordial change took place among them does not appear.

In the year 536, Belisarius, the hero of this age, took Rome from the Goths, though some time elapsed after this event before the gothic power was annihilated in Italy. But what has this our history to do with his triumphs? His master showed much zeal for religion, though ill directed; and what is worse, not grounded on the genuine fear of God. The general scarcely seemed to profess any religion at all; and the most remarkable ecclesiastical transaction in which he was concerned is sufficient to brand his name with eternal infamy. A very brief view of it shall suffice. Theodora, the empress, gave an order to Vigilius, deacon of the Roman church, to require Belisarius to secure his election to the bishopric of Rome, and the expulsion of Silverius, at that time bishop. Vigilius was in that case to present Belisarius with two hundred pounds of gold. The venal general executed the order on these infamous conditions, and delivered Silverius into the hands of Vigilius, who sent him into the island of *Palmaria*, where he died of hunger. It was worth

while just to mention this villany, that, if any persons have been seduced into an admiration of the character of Belisarius on account of his military prowess, they may see how much splendour of false virtue may exist in a man who is altogether void of the fear of God.

Justinian, though at first he seemed to take some pains to correct the consequences of this scandalous transaction of his wife, of his general, and of the unprincipled bishop of Rome, at length suffered the whole to stand. Still he continued to meddle in religious controversies, and issued an edict for the condemnation of Origen's error.

In the year 542, a council held at Orleans ordered, that if any person desired to have a parish church erected on his estate, he should first be obliged to endow it, and to find an incumbent. Hence the origin of patronages.

In the year 555 died Vigilus, bishop of Rome, after having governed eighteen years, in the see which he had so iniquitously obtained. Selfish duplicity marked his character, more eminently than that of any Roman bishop before him. But he paid dear for his intrigues and dissimulation. Justinian, who had the ambition of acting as an infallible judge of controversies himself, suffered not Vigilus to be the pope of the church. On the contrary, a little before his death, he was, though very reluctant, compelled by the emperor to consent to the decrees of a council held at Constantinople; which, by the influence of Justinian, condemned the writings called the Three Chapters; that is, three books, or passages of books, one of which was the work of the pious Theodoret of Cyprus. The controversy itself was idle and frivolous; yet how many pages of church history, so called, does it fill! But I can find no vestige of piety in the whole transaction. 'Therefore eternal silence be its doom.'

Several western bishops, because they refused

condemn the three chapters, were banished by the order of Justinian. What advantage was it to the church, that Italy and Africa were recovered to nominal orthodoxy, and to the Roman empire, when she was thus oppressed by her pretended protector!

Justinian, in his old age, fell into the notion, that the body of Jesus Christ was incorruptible. Having once formed the sentiment, he drew up an edict, and, in his usual manner, required his subjects to embrace it. Eutychius, bishop of Constantinople, had the honesty to refuse the publication of it. 'This,' said he, 'is not the doctrine of the apostles. It would follow from thence that the incarnation was only in fancy. How could an incorruptible body have been nourished by the milk of its mother? How was it possible for it, when on the cross, to be pierced by the nails, or the lance? It cannot be called incorruptible in any other sense, than as it was always unpolluted with any sinful defilement, and was not corrupted in the grave.'

But the imperial mandate was stronger than the arguments of the bishop, however reasonable. He was roughly treated, was banished from his see, and died in exile: he acted, however, uprightly, and seems from his integrity to have been a Christian indeed. Anastasius, bishop of Antioch, resisted also with much firmness: he was a person of exemplary piety, whom Justinian in vain endeavoured to gain over to his sentiments. As he knew the emperor intended to banish him, he wrote a farewell discourse to his people. He took pains to confirm the minds of men in just ideas of the human nature of Christ, and daily recited in the church that saying of the apostle: "If any man preach to you any other gospel than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." The example of a truly holy and upright person supporting a just cause is very prevalent. Most around him were induced to imitate. An opinion directly subversive of the real sufferings of

Christ, on which the efficacy of his atonement depends, appeared altogether unchristian. But God had provided better things for us, says Evagrius. While the old imperial pope was dictating the sentence of banishment against Anastasius and other prelates, he was smitten with the stroke of death. Let not profane persons exult over him; but let those who exercise their thoughts on religion take care to study the written word with humility, prayer, and pious reverence, warned by the apostacy of a man, who for many years had studied divinity and fell at last into an error, equally subversive of the dictates of common sense, and of Christian piety and diametrically opposite to all scripture: let us remember, however, that his follies and persecutions were the occasion of exhibiting some excellent characters even in the eastern church, who showed that they bore not the Christian name without a just title to that best of all appellations.

III. - MISCELLANEOUS AFFAIRS TO THE END OF THE CENTURY.

JUSTIN, the nephew of Justinian, succeeded. He recalled the bishops whom the late emperor had exiled, Eutychius of Constantinople, alone excepted. The reason of this exception I cannot learn but, after the decease of John, his successor, who held the see twelve years, Justin was prevailed on to restore Eutychius, who continued bishop of Constantinople till his death. His integrity and piety show scarcely be doubted after the long course of suffering which he sustained on account of the faith of Jesus. But, in his old age he embraced a whimsical notion that our bodies after the resurrection become thinner than air. A notion which it would not have been worth while to have mentioned at all on its own account: but it is a specimen of the low state of Christian knowledge in the east, and of the pre-

minancy of Origenism and Platonism, which had never been exterminated in Asia, since they had gained admission into the church. For the opinion, though not so fundamentally erroneous as that of Justinian, originated from the same fanciful school: and we may see what a blessing it was to the west to have been instructed in the Christian doctrines of grace, through Augustine, whence the purity and simplicity of the faith was preserved in a much superior manner, and fantastic notions could not so easily be received among them.

A number of Britons having been expelled from their country by the arms of the Anglo-Saxons, who had entered the island in the year 446, crossed the sea and settled in the adjacent parts of France. Hence the origin of the French province of Brittany. With them the faith of the gospel was preserved, as well as with their brethren in Wales and Cornwall, and some parts of Scotland and Ireland, while the major part of England was covered with Saxon idolatry. Sampson, originally a Welshman, left his own country and came into Brittany. This man founded a monastery at Dol, and was bishop of Dol himself some years. He died about the year 565, and was renowned for piety and learning in his day. He had been educated in his native country by Heltut, who was said to have been the disciple of Germanus, of Auxerre. Thus the seed sown in our island by that holy person brought forth fruit; and it is only to be regretted that the accounts of these things are so slight and scanty. About the same time died St. Malo, who, to prevent his being appointed bishop of Winchester, forsook our island, and fled to the coast of France. To the west of Brittany there was an island called Aletha, now called St. Malo's, the greatest part of the inhabitants of which were Pagans. At the desire of the few Christians who were there, Malo laboured among them till most of the inhabitants received the gospel.

and persuaded him to reside among them as their bishop, which he did till his death. Other British bishops are celebrated, who in the same age were distinguished for their piety and useful labours in Brittany.

Gildas, surnamed the Wise, another disciple of Heltut, was born at Dumbarton, in Scotland; he preached with much success, in the best sense, so far as appears, in his native country and in Ireland. He afterwards came over into Brittany, and built the monastery of Buis, which is still called by his name, says my author. Two of his discourses on the ruin of Great Britain are still extant, in which he deplores the vices and calamities of the times, and, ascribing the desolations made by the Saxons to the depravity of his countrymen, he, with honest vehemence, exhorts six British princes to repentance. He addresses with much spirit the clergy of Great Britain, and rebukes them for their ignorance, avarice, and simony.

From these hints, in conjunction with what has been elsewhere related, these things are evident; namely, that there had been a considerable degree of pure religion among our ancestors before the invasion of the Saxons; that even after the declension and decay, there were still faithful pastors, who carried back into France that spirit of godliness which the latter country, by the means of Germanus of Auxerre, had brought over into our island; and that the poison of Pelagianism must have had a considerable influence in the production of that national decay of piety which Gildas so feelingly deploras.

Colomban, an Irish priest, in this century came over into the northern parts of Scotland, and laboured with much success among the Picts. The southern parts of Scotland had been evangelized long before by the instructions of Ninias, a British bishop, who had himself been instructed at Rome. Colomban lived thirty-four years after his passage

into Britain. His disciples were remarkable for the holiness and abstemiousness of their lives. Thus, while the gospel was rapidly withdrawing from the east, where it first arose, God left not himself without witness in the most distant parts of the west.

Radegunda, daughter of Bertharius, king of Thuringia, having been taken captive by the Franks in her infancy, fell to the lot of king Clotaire, who married her. This woman might have been added to the list of those pious persons of her sex, who were made highly instrumental in instructing mankind, had she not imbibed monastic ideas, the pest which infected godly persons, in general, in these times, and which, though it could not ruin their relation to God, cut off the greatest part of their usefulness. She obtained a separation from her husband, and followed the monastic rules with great austerity to her death. These rules were now grown stricter than ever; the vows were made perpetual, and this godly queen, who might have caused her light to shine in a blessed manner in the world, was shut up during the remainder of her life in a nunnery.

Toward the latter end of this century, the Lombards came from Pannonia into Italy, and settled there under Alboinus, their first king. They fixed their metropolis at Pavia. As they were Arians by profession, heresy again took root in Italy, whose inhabitants felt all the horrors and miseries which a savage and victorious nation could inflict. But the church needed the scourge; the Roman see had been dreadfully corrupt under Vigilius, and formal superstition was corroding the vitals of genuine godliness.

At the same time John Climachus flourished, who was abbot of the monastery of Mount Sinai, in Arabia, near to which was a little monastery called the Prison, in which all who had committed any great crime, since they entered on the monastic state, voluntarily confined themselves. The account which

Climmachus gives of it is striking. The poor prisoners spent their time in prayer, with every possible external mark of self-denial and wretchedness. They did not allow themselves any one comfort of human life. In their prayers they did not dare to ask to be delivered entirely from punishment; they only begged not to be punished with the utmost rigour. The voluntary torments they endured were amazing, and this voluntary humility of theirs continued till death. But I turn from the disagreeable scene to make one remark:

How precious is the light of the gospel! How gladly, we may suppose, would many of these miserable persons have received the doctrine of free forgiveness by faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, if it had been faithfully preached among them! How does their seriousness rebuke the levity of presumptuous sinners among ourselves, who trifle with the light! And how deeply fallen was the East from the real genius of Christianity, when men distressed for sin could find no hope but in their own formalities and rigid austerities!

In the year 584, Levigildus, king of the Visigoths in Spain, having married his eldest son Hermengildus, to Ingonda, daughter of the French king, began to find effects from the marriage which he little expected. Ingonda, though persecuted by her mother-in-law, the wife of the Spanish monarch, persevered in orthodoxy, and by the assistance of Leander, bishop of Seville, under the influence of divine grace, brought over her husband to the faith. The father, enraged, commenced a grievous persecution against the orthodox in his dominions. Hermengildus was led into the grievous error of rebelling against his father, not through ambition, it seems, but through fear of his father, who appeared to be bent on his destruction. Being obliged to fly into a church, he was induced by his father's promises to surrender himself. Hermengildus at first treated as

with kindness, but afterwards banished him to Valentia. His wife Ingonda flying to the Grecian emperor, died by the way. Sometime after, the young prince, loaded with irons, had leisure to learn the vanity of earthly greatness, and exhibited every mark of piety and humility. His father sent to him an Arian bishop, offering him his favour, if he would receive the communion at his hands. Hermenigildus continued firm in the faith, and the king enraged, sent officers, who despatched him. The father lived however to repent of his cruelty; and the young prince, notwithstanding the unjustifiable step into which his passions had betrayed him, had lived long enough to give a shining example of Christian piety. Levigildus, before he died, desired Leander, bishop of Seville, whom he had much persecuted, to educate his second son Recaredus in the same principles in which he had instructed his eldest. Recaredus succeeded his father in the government, and embraced orthodoxy with much zeal: the consequence was the establishment of orthodoxy in Spain, and the destruction of Arianism, which had now no legal settlement in the world, except with the Lombards in Italy. Though this account be general and external, it seemed proper to give it, as an illustrious instance of the work of Divine Providence, effecting by the means of a pious princess a very salutary revolution in religion.

I have collected in this chapter the few events which appeared worthy of notice, from the death of Justinian to the end of this century, with a studied exclusion of the concerns of Gregory the first, bishop of Rome. He is a character deserving to be exhibited distinctly. And in connexion with his affairs, whatever else has been omitted, which falls within our plan, may be introduced in the next chapter.

IV.—GREGORY THE FIRST, BISHOP OF ROME

He was a Roman by birth, and of a noble family. But being religiously disposed, he assumed the monastic habit, and was eminently distinguished by the progress he made in piety. It was not till after he was drawn back, in a degree, to a secular life by his employments in the church, that he became thoroughly sensible what advantage he had enjoyed for his own soul from religious retirement. With tears he owned that he had had the world under his feet while he was absorbed in heavenly contemplation; but was now bereft of comfort. 'Now,' says he, 'my mind, by reason of pastoral cares, is oppressed with the business of secular persons, and after so fair an appearance of rest, is defiled with the dust of earthly action. And suffering itself to be distracted by outward things in condescension to many, even while it desires inward things, it returns to them, without doubt, more faintly. I weigh, therefore, what I endure: I weigh what I have lost, and while I look at that which I have lost, my present burdens are more heavy.'

In truth, in different periods of his life he moved in opposite extremes. He was one while dormant in the quietism of solitude; another while, involved in the multiplicity of episcopal cares at Rome. If his lot had been cast in the earlier and purer days of Christianity, he would neither have been a monk, nor a bishop charged with such extensive secular concerns, and so would have avoided the evils at which he complains. The great sees in these times, that of Rome in particular, through the increasing growth of spiritual domination, and the load of worldly business very improperly connected with it, worldly, though in some sense ecclesiastical, were indeed agreeable enough to minds like that of Vigilius, earthly and ambitious, but were fatiguing to

yond measure to men like Gregory, who unfeignedly loved heavenly things. Nothing could be more unwise than the custom which prevailed, of encouraging monasticism and very large episcopal governments at the same time. The transition from the one to the other, as in Gregory's case (and it was a common one), must to holy minds, like his, have been a trial of no small magnitude. The serious complaints, however, which Gregory made of this trial during the whole scene of his bishopric, proceeded from the spirituality of his affections; and all, who have enjoyed in private the sweets of communion with God, and have found how difficult it is, in the hurry of business, to preserve a degree of the same spirit, will sympathize with him. A mediocrity, and a mixture of employment and retirement, is, doubtless, the best situation for religious improvement.

Being drawn from his monastery, and ordained to the ministry, he was sent from Rome to Constantinople, to transact ecclesiastical affairs. Here he became acquainted with Leander, afterwards bishop of Seville, the same person that we have spoken of in the relation of the affairs of Spain. Leander and he found in each other a similarity of taste and spirit; Gregory opened his heart to him: 'I found my soul,' says he, 'convinced of the necessity of securing salvation; but I delayed too long, entangled with the world. At length I threw myself into a monastery; now I thought I had placed an insuperable bar between myself and the world. But again I am tossed on the tempestuous ocean, and unless I may enjoy the communion of my brethren, I can find no solace to my soul.'

He had, however, taken with him some of the brethren of his monastery, and with them had enjoyed the benefit of Christian discourse, and of searching the Scriptures. Here, also, through their exhortation, he began his long commentary on the *book of Job*, which he finished in his episcopacy.

His residence at Constantinople was not without, at least, some use to the church. By his arguments and influence he quashed the fanciful notion of the archbishop Eutychius, already mentioned, concerning the qualities of the human body after the resurrection. Had it not been for the timely and vigorous opposition of a man so respectable as Gregory was for knowledge and piety, the notion might have continued, with many, to the disgrace of Christianity at this day. The emperor Tiberius, who had succeeded Justin, supported the labours of Gregory with his authority.

After his return to Rome, there was so great an inundation of the Tiber, that it flowed upon the walls of the city, and threw down many monuments and ancient structures. The granaries of the church were overflowed, by which a prodigious quantity of wheat was lost. Presently after, an infectious distemper invaded the city. Pelagius the bishop fell a victim to it among the first. The destruction prevailed, and many houses were left without an inhabitant. In this distress, the people were anxious to choose a bishop in the room of the deceased Pelagius, and by unanimous consent the election fell upon Gregory. He, with that humility which formed invariably a striking feature of his character, earnestly refused, and loudly proclaimed his own unworthiness. He did more; he wrote to Mauritius, the successor of Tiberius, beseeching him to withhold his assent. Germanus, the governor of Constantinople, intercepting the messenger, and opening the letter of Gregory, informed Mauritius of the election. The emperor confirmed it with pleasure. In the meantime the plague continued to make dreadful havoc; and Gregory, however backward to receive the office of a bishop, forgot not the duties of a pastor. He persisted in praying and preaching till the plague ceased.

He was all this time as eager to avoid the honour

of the episcopal office, as he was to discharge the duty of it. The gates were watched, and his flight was prevented for a time. But he found means to be conveyed in a wicker basket out of the city, and concealed himself three days. The zealous search of the people discovered him at length, and he was obliged to enter upon his bishopric. This happened in the year 590.

Gregory continued to discharge the office in the same spirit in which he began it. Other bishops had been sedulous to adorn churches with gold or silver; he gave himself wholly, so far as he could, to the care of souls. The melancholy circumstances of his accession corresponded with the gloomy state of the church—in the East, almost universally fallen—in the West, tarnished with much superstition, and defiled by variety of wickedness. The whole period of his episcopacy, which was thirteen years and a half, was disastrous beyond measure, because of the ferocious Lombards; and Gregory himself was firmly persuaded that the end of the world was near. Hence he had evidently a strong contempt of sublunary things, and loved to refresh his mind with prospects beyond the grave.

Gregory was solicitous for the conversion of the Lombards from the Arian heresy, and therefore he wrote to the bishops of Italy, to avail themselves of their influence to unite all the young persons of that nation, who had been baptized in the Arian communion, to the general church, to preach to them the doctrine of eternal life, and to secure to themselves a pleasing account of their pastoral labours at the last day. Under his administration a gradual accession of this people was made to the church, notwithstanding the great power of the Lombard princes, and their obstinate attachment to Arianism. Indeed the shining example of Gregory himself must have made a very powerful impression on the minds of all who had opportunity of knowing him. He was careful

to preserve the great revenues of the church, but no man was ever more conscientious to employ them to good purposes. As he loved to imitate his predecessor Gelasius, he followed the statement of the revenues which he had drawn up, and formed an estimate of them in money; distributions of which he made to the clergy, monasteries, churches, the officers of his house, deaconries, and hospitals. He regulated the sums to be allotted to each at four times of the year, an order which was observed three hundred years after. A great volume was kept in the palace of the Lateran, containing the names of the poor who were the objects of his liberality, their age and circumstances, at Rome, in Italy, and even in distant provinces. On every first day of the month, he distributed to the necessities of the poor, according to the season, various articles of provision. Every day he distributed alms to the sick and infirm; and before he sat down to eat, he sent portions from his table to some indigent people, who were ashamed to appear.

Peter, bishop of Terraco in Spain, had consented to a species of persecution of the Jews in his diocese, by permitting them to be molested in their festivities, and to be more than once driven from the place in which they celebrated them. Let those, who have been led by fashionable historians to annex the idea of persecution to that of the priesthood, take notice that Gregory bishop of Rome wrote to Peter, to condemn the practice, and to give his decisive opinion, that the Jews should not be in the least molested, that they ought to be won over to the faith by the sweetness of gospel-preaching, and by the denunciation of divine judgments against infidelity, and that these were Christian arts and methods, while those of a different nature tended only to harden and disgust the human mind.

To Leander of Seville he expresses with tears the pressure of his mind under loads of solicitude, and

earnestly entreats his prayers. He congratulates him also on the conversion of king Recaredus of Spain; and while he rejoices at the news of that prince's piety and virtues, he admonishes the bishop to watch over the royal convert, that his life may correspond to so hopeful a beginning. He wrote sometime after to the same prince, to recommend to him a strong guard over anger, pride, and lust, vices more peculiarly apt to infest princes. Of all the princes of this time, he seems most to have adorned the gospel. He was just, munificent, and liberal. And before he left the world, he publicly confessed his sins, and appeared to have been possessed of true piety, so far as we can judge. He died about the close of this century.

John, bishop of Constantinople, disturbed in Gregory's time the peace of the church, by assuming to himself the title of universal bishop. The pride and arrogance with which he assumed it, was only equalled by the obstinacy with which he persevered. Gregory wrote with much vehemence against his haughtiness, and on this occasion, laid down some memorable rules of humility, which severely condemned, not himself, but his successors in the Roman see. In what a state must the east have been, to revere as a great saint, both living and dying, so proud a man as John of Constantinople! But their godliness was nearly expiring, and the Mahometan scourge was at hand.

Cyriacus succeeded John of Constantinople, whose pride has been mentioned already. At his solemn ordination the people shouted, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' Superstition naturally paved the way for the dominion of the clergy; and the bishops of the great sees were gradually increasing in secular grandeur. The congratulation just mentioned was calculated to encourage Cyriacus to emulate the ambition of his predecessor. Gregory justly finds fault

with it, in a letter to the great men of Constantinople, shows that the acclamation properly belonged to the stone which the Lord had laid for a foundation in his church, and observes that it was impious to ascribe those praises to the creature, which belong to the Creator. Yet he is willing to excuse the mistake as proceeding from a charitable intention. Gregory, no doubt, had himself too high views of the dignity of his own see, and its supposed relation to Saint Peter blinded his judgment. The exaltation of Constantinople, through the domineering pretensions of the late bishop, excited his jealousy, and so subtle and intricate are the motions of the heart, that he himself might not at all be aware of the selfishness which probably influenced his conduct. I cannot doubt, however, from the unaffected humility of his whole life, that he cordially detested sacerdotal ambition. The excessive dignity of the prelatical character would have done little harm to Christendom, had all prelates been like Gregory. But as this was not to be expected, the state ought to have set bounds to ecclesiastical encroachments before this period.

The bodily afflictions of Gregory, in connection with the miseries of the times, are forcibly described by him in a letter to Italica, a patrician lady.

‘I can find nothing else to say of myself, than that as a just punishment for my sins, I have been almost eleven months confined to my bed. I am so oppressed with the gout, that life is a heavy punishment. I faint daily through pain, and breathe after death as my remedy. Among the clergy and people of the city, scarcely a freeman or a slave is exempt from fevers. Africa and the east are also full of misery and desolation. I see the end of all things approaching; be therefore less solicitous on account of your own calamities. Study with alacrity that godliness, which has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.’

Another instance of his bodily sufferings shall close this branch of his story. Writing to his friend Venantius, who was likewise afflicted with the gout, he says, ‘what ought we to do, but to call our sins to remembrance, and to thank God, that he purifies us by afflicting our flesh.—Let us take care, that we pass not from one degree of torment to another, and let us consider the goodness of God, who threatens us with death, that he may imprint in us an edifying fear of his judgments. How many sinners have continued immersed in sin through life without a headache, and have suddenly been cast into hell!’—I rejoice to find in this great man the marks of that deep humility, which is known only to true converts, and of that wise improvement of affliction, of which theorists may reason, but which saints only feel. He concludes thus benevolently and piously to his friend: ‘May the Lord infuse into your soul these words by the inspiration of his Spirit, cleanse you from your iniquities, give you here the joy of his consolation, and eternal reward hereafter.’

It is impossible for any impartial person, who has attended to the spirit and conduct of Gregory, as exhibited in his pastoral memoirs, not to feel a conviction of the eminent piety, integrity, and humility of this bishop. Yet it has been the fashion to arraign his character with great severity, on account of his conduct in the latter part of his life. He has been accused of great ingratitude towards one excellent and virtuous emperor, and of egregious flattery towards another who was profligate and tyrannical. The evidence already adduced of his disposition and temper should naturally dispose us to receive with much caution such grievous accusations. I shall throw together into this chapter the facts on which our judgment is to be founded.

A series of events had given Gregory a strong prejudice against the government of Mauritius. Their *opposition of sentiment* had remarkably alienated

their spirits from one another, though they once had the most sincere esteem for each other's character. Gregory had been very acceptable to Mauritius, who had strongly favoured his promotion to the bishopric. Nor is there any reason to doubt of the sincerity of the bishop's professions of a very high regard for the emperor, when he made them. Changes of this sort are common amongst mankind, and the declarations which men make at different times of the characters of the same persons, however contradictory, are not to be always charged to insincerity.

Mauritius made a law, to prohibit men, who had held civil offices under the government, from undertaking the administration of the church. Of this Gregory approved; but a clause in the same law, which forbade military men to enter into monasteries till the time of their service was expired, or till they were disabled for the profession, met not with the same approbation. Gregory, too fond of monastic institutions, and conceiving them necessary for the souls of some, though not of all, expostulated with the emperor on the impiety of the decree. He does so, however, with all possible decency and respect, and lays open his sentiments with a frankness and modesty which do honour to his character. Doubtless he was mistaken, and the mistake was common to him with the most pious of those times. He promulged, however, the emperor's decree through Italy, and thus, as he himself says, he was faithful to God, at the same time obedient to his prince.

In this transaction, in which it does not appear that he succeeded with the emperor, the zeal of Gregory was quickened by the strong presentiments of the near approach of the day of judgment, which filled his mind. This mistaken notion seems to have dwelt with Gregory; nor was it in him a mere speculation. He was practically serious in the expectation. I find him pressing it in another letter to the nobles and landholders of the island of Sicily.

whom he reproved for suffering their labourers to remain in a state of idolatry. He justly observes, that they were bound in conscience to take care of the spiritual instruction of those who laboured for them in temporal things, and he earnestly exhorts them to promote the charitable work. The selfishness and insensibility, with which so many, in modern times, can reap lucrative advantages from the labours of mariners, slaves, and apprentices, with no more attention to their best interests than if they were of the brute creation, here naturally forces itself on our attention. Other letters of the same kind, demonstrate the zeal of Gregory for the propagation of Christianity among idolaters and infidels.

I have already mentioned the jealous uneasiness of Gregory at the pride of John, bishop of Constantinople. The title of Universal Bishop had upon his own application been conferred upon him in an Eastern council, and the policy of some former emperors had induced them to compliment the prelates of Constantinople with it; because the honour and influence of the imperial city were augmented by this means. Gregory was the more vexed at this, because the synod of Chalcedon had offered the same title to the Roman bishops, and they had not accepted it. He in his letters called himself the servant of the servants of God. Such humility might have been thought affected in a person not eminent for this grace. Doubtless it would have been more prudent in him not to have assumed it. But it continues to this day the title of his successors, a standing mark of egregious hypocrisy! That which deceived Gregory in this case was the erroneous notion of the pre-eminence of his own see, as belonging to St. Peter; yet I no way doubt but he sincerely abhorred the pride of the Eastern prelate. Had he himself, however, been more completely humble and less superstitious, he would have suffered the affair to pass with greater indifference. While in one respect

we behold this good man acting the patriot and the Christian, relieving the distressed, and ransoming the captives with unbounded liberality, nominally possessing great ecclesiastical wealth, but employing it all to the most beneficent purposes, and sparing no labour or fatigue; in another we see him writing and negotiating with persevering vehemence concerning a title, in which, though his cause was unquestionably just, his eagerness was unnecessarily sanguine. He solicited the emperor Mauritius on the subject, but in vain. And this was an additional cause of the prejudices, which they imbibed against each other.

It cannot be supposed, that the bishop of Rome could be acquainted with the personal character of Phocas, who was in truth a man of extraordinary wickedness; and the late transactions at Constantinople would naturally be misrepresented to him in the accounts transmitted thence. Prejudiced as he was against Mauritius, and willing to hope better things from the new emperor, he wrote him a congratulatory letter, in which he studiously avoided saying any thing on the detail of circumstances, on which he must have been very insufficiently informed and dwelt on that which was certain, namely, the adorable hand of Divine Providence in changing the times, and in transferring kingdoms as he pleases. He exults in the prospect which he had too eagerly formed of a wise, just, and pious administration. He modestly hints at the great abuses of the late government, and exhorts Phocas to redress them, reminding him, 'that a Roman emperor commands freemen, and not slaves.' Such is the substance of his letter, in which I see nothing unworthy of the piety and patriotism of Gregory, but much of his wonted care for the good of the church and the public.

For near a century and a half the gospel of Christ had been declining in Britain, and for the greater part of that time had been, as we have seen, confined

to Wales and Cornwall, or to the mountains of Scotland. Ireland, too, still preserved something of the light, while the Angles or Saxons, our ancestors, destroyed every evangelical appearance in the heart of the island. No barbarians were ever more ferocious or more idolatrous; and the Britons, who escaped their ravages, oppressed one another with civil broils. Being favoured with some cessation from their wars with the Saxons, they lost by degrees all traces of former piety, though the form of Christianity still remained. One proof among others, which the old historian Gildas gives of their entire want of Christian zeal is, that they took not the least pains for the conversion of the Saxons. Seven Saxon kingdoms, called the Heptarchy, were now formed, altogether ignorant and idolatrous, while the few British churches were inattentive to the propagation of Christian truth in the island. And the Saxons continued, some of them for a century, others more than two centuries, immersed in darkness.

One cannot, from these circumstances, form any agreeable idea either of the piety or of the knowledge of the British Christians. Nor are the excuses which our Protestant historians are inclined to make for their want of zeal, at all satisfactory. It has been said that, 'The hostilities of the Angles would cause such attempts to be arduous;' but let the reader only reflect how such difficulties were surmounted by zealous and charitable Christians in former ages. I cannot but therefore subscribe to the testimony of our ancient historians, 'that much worthier pastors were sent by the divine goodness, through whom those, whom God had foreknown, might believe to salvation.' A testimony as evangelical in its language, as it is solid in fact.

It was about 150 years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, that Gregory sent his famous mission into our island, towards the close of the sixth century. It was no sudden thought, but the

effect of much deliberation. Even before his consecration at Rome, walking one day in the forum, he saw some very handsome youths exposed to sale. Asking of what country they were, he was informed they were of the island of Britain. 'Are the inhabitants of that island Christians or Pagans?' They are Pagans, was the reply. 'Alas!' said he, deeply sighing, 'that the prince of darkness should possess countenances so luminous, and that so fair a front should carry minds destitute of eternal grace.' 'What is the name of the nation?' Angli, it was said. 'In truth they have angelic countenances, and it is a pity they should not be coheirs with angels in heaven.' 'What is the province from which they come?' Dena, that is Northumberland, he was told. 'It is well,' said he, 'De ira, snatched from the wrath of God, and called to the mercy of Christ.' 'What is the name of their king?' 'Ella,' was the answer. 'Playing upon the name, Alleluia should be sung in those regions.' Impressed with the importance of the object, he earnestly entreated the then Roman bishop to send a mission to the island, offering himself as one ready for the task. Nothing but the officious benevolence of the Roman citizens prevented the work at that time. Gregory was too much beloved at Rome to be allowed to leave it.

It was the character of Gregory to pursue with unwearied attention any plan or scheme of piety or discipline, which he had once conceived. After consecration, in the year 595 he directed a presbyter whom he had sent into France, to instruct the young Saxons of seventeen or eighteen years of age in Christianity. He intended to prepare them for the mission into our island; and in the year 597 he actually sent missionaries hither. They were a number of monks, at the head of whom was one Augustine. In obedience to Gregory's directions they proceeded on their journey; but their numbers failed them, when they reflected on the vast

and dangers to which they thought themselves likely to be exposed. The faith, and zeal, and simplicity of a Christian missionary were at this time grown rare in the world; and Augustine was sent back by the rest, to intreat Gregory to discharge them from the service. The prelate wrote exhortatory letters, advising them to proceed in confidence of divine aid. He informed them, that it had been better not to have begun a good work, than to recede from it afterwards. He entreated them not to be deterred by the labour of the journey, nor by the breath of malevolence. He set before them the heavenly prospects, and prayed that he himself might see the fruit of their labour in the eternal country. For though, says he, I cannot labour with you, may I at the same time be found in the joy of retribution, because I am willing to labour! Nor did he neglect any means proper to accommodate the missionaries: he recommended them to the attention of Etherius, bishop of Arles, and secured them all the assistance in France, that might expedite their passage into Britain, and every convenience which they needed. Thus animated, they arrived in Britain.

There was, however, a remarkable concurrence of providential circumstances which facilitated the work, and gave it a more expeditious success than might have been expected from appearances. It is very observable, how much the Lord has made use of women in the propagation of the gospel among idolaters. To former instances of this sort, we must add, that two queens were concerned in this work, one of whom was the infamous Brunehout. Desirous to cover her vices by the appearance of religion, she had, at Gregory's request, given the missionaries every possible assistance. The other, a character on whom the mind will dwell with more pleasure, was Bertha, the only daughter of Caribert, king of Paris, a descendant of Clovis. Ethelbert, to whom she had been married in his

father's lifetime, was now king of Kent, and one of the most wise and powerful of the Saxon princes. He had not been allowed to marry the French princess but on the express stipulation, that she should be permitted to make free profession of Christianity, in which she had been educated. She brought over with her a French bishop to the court of Dorobernium, now Canterbury. Her principles were firm and sound : her conduct was worthy of the Christian name ; and her influence over her husband was considerable. Her zealous piety was not inferior to that of the queen Clovis, which had been attended with such happy consequences in France, and every thing conspired to favour the missionaries.

Ethelbert assigned Augustine a habitation in the isle of Thanet. Here he remained at first with his associates, who were nearly forty. By the direction of Gregory, they had taken with them French interpreters, by whose means they informed the king, that they were come from Rome, and brought him the best tidings in the world, eternal life to those who received them, and the endless enjoyment of life with the living and true God. After some days, Ethelbert paid them a visit, but being apprehensive of enchantments, he took care to receive them in the open air, where he thought he should be safer than in a house. The missionaries met him, singing litanies for their own salvation, and that of those for whose sake they came hither. Sitting down by the king's direction, they preached to him and his attendants the word of life. I cannot produce the smallest extract of the sermon : but that it explained the fundamentals, at least of the gospel, there seems no reason to doubt. One may form some idea of it by the king's answer, which was to this effect, ' They are fine words and promises, which ye bring, but because they are new and uncertain, I cannot afford my assent to them nor relinquish those religious practices which I was

together with all the English nation, have for so long a time observed. But as ye are come hither from a great distance, and as I seem to discover that ye are willing to communicate to us those things, which ye believe to be true and most excellent, we are not willing to disturb you, but rather to receive you in a friendly manner, and to afford you what may be necessary for your support; nor do we hinder you from uniting all, whom ye can persuade by preaching, to the faith of your religion.' He gave them a mansion in the royal city of Canterbury, with all necessary accommodations, and the licence of preaching the word. As they approached the city, they sang in concert this litany; We pray thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thine anger and thy fury may be removed from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia.

Their conduct at Canterbury was correspondent to these beginnings. They prayed, fasted, watched, preached the word of life to all, as opportunity served: they lived as men above the world: received nothing from those whom they taught, except necessities; they practised what they taught, and showed a readiness to suffer, or even to die, for the truth which they preached. Some believed and were baptized, admiring their innocent lives, and tasting the sweetness of their doctrine. Near the city there was an old church, built in the times of the Romans, in which queen Bertha was wont to pray. In this the missionaries first held their assemblies, sang, prayed, preached, and baptized, till, the king himself being converted to the faith, they obtained a larger licence for preaching every where, and of building or repairing churches. When he himself, among others, delighted with the holiness of their lives, and the preciousness of Gospel promises, confirmed by many miracles, believed and was baptized, numbers crowded to hear, and received the word. The king, congratulating the new converts, declared that he

would compel no man to become a Christian; however he embraced those who did so with a more intimate affection as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. For the missionaries had taught him, that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not compulsive. He now gave to them a settlement in Canterbury, suited to their station, with all necessary accommodations.

Augustine returning into France, received ordination, as the archbishop of the English nation, from the bishop of Arles, and returning into Britain, sent Laurentius the presbyter, and Peter the monk, to acquaint Gregory with his success, and to receive answers to various questions. To his inquiries concerning the maintenance of the clergy, Gregory answered, that the donations made to the church were, by the customs of the Roman See, divided into four portions, one for the bishop and his family to support hospitality, a second to the clergy, a third to the poor, a fourth to the reparation of churches: that as the pastors were all monks, they ought to live in common, with a remarkable exception, which proves that the absolute prohibition of marriage, one of the marks of Antichrist, was not yet enjoined the clergy, namely that those of them who preferred the marriage state, might be allowed to marry, and receive their maintenance out of the monastery. To another question, which related to the diversity of customs and liturgies in different churches, the answer of Gregory was liberal; namely, that the new bishop was not bound to follow the precedent of Rome, but that he might select whatever parts or rules appeared the most eligible, and best adapted to promote the piety of the infant church of England, and compose them into a system for its use. A number of other questions and answers are recorded likewise, too uninteresting to deserve a place here. Yet amidst the childish superstition of the times, the enlightened mind of Gregory appears; and his occasional comment on St. Paul's words, *every*

ing the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, in which the bishop understands the Apostle as describing himself to be free and enslaved at the same time, with a double respect to his natural and spiritual state, evinces the solidity of his evangelical knowledge.

Augustine having intimated, that the harvest was plenteous, but that the labourers were few, Gregory sent him more missionaries, and directed him to constitute a bishop at York, who might have other subordinate bishops; yet, in such a manner, that Augustine of Canterbury should be metropolitan of all England. Such were the rudiments of the English church. Gregory has been censured for excessive eagerness in settling a plan of ecclesiastical government for places as yet not in the least evangelized: and it must be owned, that this extreme care of subordination and uniformity does seem premature; but the spirit of the times favoured such hasty external institutions.

He wrote also to Ethelbert, to congratulate, instruct, and exhort him, setting before him the example of the great Constantine, and pressing him to extend the propagation of the gospel. His zeal was much animated by the near prospect which he himself had of the end of the world, and of which he failed not to inform the king of Kent: the latter reigned fifty years, and died in 616. As a statesman he was great, as a Christian greater still. And few princes in any age were richer blessings to their subjects than Ethelbert and Bertha.

But this fine gold was not without some alloy! Before these events there existed, in Wales particularly, a British church. Augustine, willing to establish a uniformity of discipline and customs in the island, invited the Welsh bishops to a conference, and began to admonish them to enter into Christian peace and concord, that with hearts united, they might join in evangelizing the pagans. The Britons

observed Easter at a season different from that of the Roman Church, and did many other things contrary to her customs. The conference proved fruitless; the Britons would hearken to no prayers or exhortations; and Augustine, in the close, had recourse to a miraculous sign. A blind man was introduced to be healed. We are told that the Britons had no success; but that Augustine's prayers were heard, and his sight was restored. The Britons were induced to confess, that Augustine was sent of God, but pleaded the obstinacy of their people, as a reason for their non-compliance. A second synod was appointed, attended by seven British bishops, and many of their learned men, belonging to the famous monastery at Bangor, of which Dinoth was at that time the abbot. Before these came to the synod, they asked the advice of a person of reputed sanctity, whether they should give up their own traditions on the authority of Augustine or not. Let humility, said he, be the test, and if you find, when you come to the synod, that he rises up to you at your approach, obey him; if not, let him be despised by you. On so precarious an evidence, it seems, did he rest the proof of humility. It happened, that Augustine continued sitting on their arrival, which might easily have taken place, without any intentional insult: the Britons were however incensed, and would hearken to no terms of reconciliation. Augustine proposed to them to agree with him only in three things, leaving other points of difference undecided, namely, to observe Easter at the same time with the rest of the Christian world, to administer baptism after the Roman manner, and to join with Augustine in preaching the gospel to the English. In all other things, says he, we will bear you with patience. The Britons were inexorable, and refused to acknowledge his authority. 'If you will not have peace with brethren, said the archbishop of Canterbury, roused at length into an unbecoming

warmth, you will have war with enemies ; and if you will not preach to the English the way of life, you will suffer death at their hands.' It happened afterwards, that in an invasion of the Pagan Saxons of the north, the Bangorian monks were cruelly destroyed, though long after the death of Augustine. He died in peaceable possession of the See of Canterbury, after having lived to see the gospel propagated with increasing success. He ordained Millitus and Justus bishops ; London was brought into the pale of the church, and the southern parts of the island found the benefit of his labours, and of those of his auxiliaries.

Thus far of the first of the Gregories ; it will not be saying enough in his praise, though it is a truth, that it would have been to the advantage of the reputation of the Roman Church, if he had been the last of that name.

CONCLUSION.

- The attentive reader will have already remarked in the course of the narrative of the sixth century, the rapid growth of that ecclesiastical power, which shortly afterwards became fully developed in that "mystery of iniquity," THE PAPACY. From this period the scene entirely changes. That which up to this time had been "the Christian Church," is now falling into the possession of the Prince of Darkness. A total apostacy has commenced, and is rapidly consummating. Here, therefore, we pause. An entire change of the state of things in the visible church, seems to prescribe a similar change in the character of the history. Instead, therefore, of following our author in his search after the scattered fragments of the true church, hidden as they were from view, by the superincumbent mass of the Apostate Roman power; we shall here break off the narrative, resuming it under the more natural form of a HISTORY OF THE PAPACY, and of the sufferings of the Church of Christ under its reign. In this work, which it is hoped will quickly follow the present publication, the history will be carried forward to the times of the Reformation; at which point, meeting and uniting with the volumes of Dr. Milner and Mr. Scott which are already before the public, the narrative will be rendered consecutive and complete.

